

CABINET: MINUTES

Date: 27th April 2004

Time: 10.00 am – 12.07 pm

Present: Councillor K Walters (Chairman)

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

Apologies: Councillor J Reynolds

Also in Attendance:

Councillors: A Bowen, S Brinton* R Clarke, S Giles, A
Kent, S King* M Leeke, R Mair and L Wilson*.

* For part of the meeting only.

473. MINUTES

It was resolved:

To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd March 2004 as
a correct record.

474. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Melton declared a prejudicial interest in agenda Item 7 “Review of the arrangements with the District Councils to deliver Highway Services” as the leader of Fenland District Council.

Councillor Johnstone declared a personal interest in agenda Item 14 “Compacts” as a non-executive director of Addenbrooke’s Hospital.

475. PETITION CUTTER FERRY BRIDGE

At the invitation of the Chairman, Ann Langley the organiser of the above petition, was allowed 3 minutes under the Council’s Petitions Procedure to introduce a petition which called on Cambridgeshire County Council to repair the Cutter Ferry Footbridge and to re-open it as soon as possible. 1114 people had supported the electronic petition compiled with little publicity on line. It was explained that there was general disbelief at the amount of time it was taking to repair the bridge and examples were given of the inconvenience caused to local people who currently had to find an alternative crossing over the River Cam.

It was noted that the issue of repair of this bridge was included on a later report on the agenda.

476. ISSUES ARISING FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

A) Historical Resources and Culture Centre (HRCC) - Call In – Report from the Education Libraries and Heritage Scrutiny Committee of 19th March

In the absence of the Chairman of the Education Libraries and Heritage Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Bowen was invited to present the report. In his introduction Councillor Bowen explained that the Chairman of the scrutiny committee had called in the Cabinet decision to appoint a preferred bidder for progressing the above Private Finance Initiative project following concerns relating to:

- a) The possible change of location for the HRCC, the justification for the change, and the suitability of the new location:
- b) Whether the revised proposals represented value for money and in particular whether a proper evaluation had been undertaken, including alternatives to provision via the Public Finance Initiative.

Following a thorough review, including questions to the appropriate officers and the relevant portfolio holder, the scrutiny committee agreed that the Cabinet decision should not be referred back to Cabinet for further consideration. Cabinet were advised that the Committee supported the continuation of the project and the detailed evaluation of bids following the resolution of outstanding issues.

The portfolio holder reported that he was not yet in a position to appoint a preferred bidder.

It was resolved:

To note the views of the Scrutiny Committee not to refer back the decisions taken at the Cabinet meeting on 2nd March on the Historical Resource and Cultural Centre (HRCC) Project and their support for the continuation of the project.

B) MEMBER LED REVIEW OF LEA PROVISION OF SUPPORT FOR ICT IN SCHOOLS – FINAL REPORT

Councillor Bowen and Councillor Wilson jointly introduced this report which had reviewed the proposed Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Support to schools.

Following the outcome of the review the following recommendations were made to Cabinet:

- 1. That adequate project management documentation should be produced for the School's Portal.
- 2. That the Education Libraries and Heritage (ELH) ICT service's core business be defined and funded centrally, to give the service a stronger and more stable base.

3. That the benefits and possible uses of being connected to the Cambridge Community Network (CCN) be effectively communicated to schools.
4. That a short (1 page) strategy document be created for the service, with the remaining detail from the current strategy document going into an implementation plan (or similar) to be informed, prioritised and focussed by the strategy document.
5. That the Council give a much stronger steer to schools than it does currently regarding the software and hardware that they procure, along the lines of schools meeting certain standards in return for receiving support. To facilitate this, the Panel also recommends that much work is undertaken around communicating to schools what Total Cost of Ownership means, along with the risks of going it alone and the potential for increased reliability and support through increased conformity.
6. That a report be commissioned that examines the potential economies and benefits that could arise from joining up aspects of the ELH ICT service with the Council's IT department.
7. That alternative accommodation be considered for the ELH ICT service. This could form part of the same activity as the previous recommendation.
8. That a series of training courses and certificates for teaching staff be brought out by the ELH ICT service.
9. That the role of the ELH ICT service be more clearly defined, in order that schools' expectations are effectively managed.

Councillor Wilson the Chairman highlighted the potential savings that could be achieved by ELH ICT sharing premises and a procurement strategy (recommendations 6 and 7). In relation to recommendation 9 this was clarified as the need to define the services ELH ICT would support. This would not affect the choice that schools would still have, but would temper the schools sometimes unrealistically high expectations of what the service could deliver.

In response, the portfolio holder Councillor Wilkinson thanked the panel for the very technical and competent review undertaken which the Cabinet would not have had the time to undertake. He did add that the service had been judged good by Ofsted and had commented that since 2000 this had been one of the most improved services. In response to the report's comments that the funding of the service mostly came from Service Level Agreements negotiated with schools with a small amount of central funding, it was pointed out that this low level of core funding was the direct result of the delegation of budgets to schools.

The Chairman of Cabinet also placed on record his personal thanks to the Review team. While commending the excellent review undertaken, Cabinet considered that they were not in a position to agree the recommendations without a further officer report on the practicalities of implementing the recommendations.

It was resolved:

To agree that an officer report should be received back to Cabinet on the practicalities of implementing the recommendations from the scrutiny committee set out in appendix A of the report.

477. COMMUNITY STRATEGIES

Cabinet considered a report on the Community Strategies for Cambridge, East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire. The report set out proposed steps to define the future activities of the Local Strategic Partnerships and community planning processes.

Cabinet commented on the need to make reference to the Police Consultative Group in paragraph 2.7 (iii) and the need to include the Education and Skills Council as a partner in respect of post 16 Education strategies.

The need for more affordable and key worker housing was raised as an issue and concerns were expressed that the lack of Government resources was preventing sufficient suitable housing to be made available.

Cabinet welcomed the Government intention to guide local priority setting through fiscal planning and that the second Public Service Agreement (2004-08) was to be based on the County Council's CPA Improvement Plan, community strategies and involvement from district councils.

It was resolved:

To submit, with minor additions suggested at the Cabinet, the Community Strategies to Council for its approval.

478. NETWORK MONITORING REPORT 2003, NETWORK SERVICE PLAN 2004, ADDITIONS TO THE MEDIUM SIZE TRAFFIC AND SAFETY SCHEMES AND BRIDGES PROGRAMME

The report on Traffic Monitoring report set out information on traffic flows, flow composition vehicle occupancy and overall trends required by the County Council as Highway Authority in order to fulfil its functions.

One Member drew attention to the increased traffic flows in East Cambridgeshire and Fenland on the A10 and A14. As these areas were due for further expansion, there was a need for greater government expenditure on the necessary infrastructure to prevent gridlock. The Portfolio holder acknowledged that market towns would continue to grow but highlighted the measures included in the Market Town Transport Strategies to provide more choice in public transport and encourage the use of alternate sustainable transport.

The Road Safety Monitoring report reviewed road safety activity in Cambridgeshire in 2003/04 and reported progress in implementing the Road Safety Strategy directed at reducing the number of accidents and casualties on Cambridgeshire's roads as well as reporting on road casualty reduction

measures and road safety partnerships. As it was clear that the current target to reduce slight injuries had been too ambitious, this report recommended a reduction target for this particular category.

The Joint Road Casualty Report 2003 drew together all information on road accident casualties in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

The Network Services Plan set the Council's objectives and demonstrated how the 2004/05 capital and revenue budget was to be allocated, providing details on various work programmes and reporting on the performance of the Highways and Engineering Division. The favourable Local Transport Plan Settlement would allow for three additional traffic and safety medium sized schemes to be implemented.

A replacement for the Cutter Ferry bridge had also been included in the bridge programme following its closure on structural safety grounds in November. It was reported that the intention would be to take advantage of this work to widen the bridge and improve the pedestrian approach ramps to enable its use by cyclists, as well as pedestrians. In order to fund this work, the work to refurbish Carter bridge over the railway, and the replacement of Hinxtan Bridge would need to be postponed and rescheduled for the following year's programme.

Councillor Leeke as a local member with an specific interest was invited to speak concerning Cutter Ferry Bridge, which had already been the subject of a Petition received earlier in the meeting. He indicated that along with the other local members he very much supported the replacement of the bridge and while recognising that it would impact on other areas of the Bridge Maintenance Programme, reminded the meeting that the other bridges were not currently closed on safety grounds.

Cabinet commended the reports for their clarity and the excellent information provided in them. In addition Cabinet supported the view that they should not only be placed on the internet, but that be made widely available on CD, as the cost of this format was likely to be considerably cheaper than providing bulky paper copies.

It was resolved to agree:

- i) The Network Monitoring Report 2003
- ii) The change in the slight injury target to 3000 slight casualties by 2010.
- iii) The Network Service Plan 2004
- iv) The inclusion of the next three schemes on the priority list in the Medium Sized Traffic and Safety Schemes programme for implementation in 2004/5 in respect of Carlton Way Cambridge traffic calming scheme, the A1101 Shippea Hill bend improvement and the B1428 Cambridge Street, St Neots route scheme.

- v) The inclusion of Cutter Ferry Bridge Cambridge within the Bridges Programme for 2004/5.

479. REVIEW OF THE ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE DISTRICT COUNCILS TO DELIVER HIGHWAY SERVICES

Cabinet received a report setting proposals to terminate the current District Highway Agency and the partnership agreements with Cambridge City, Huntingdonshire District Council and Fenland District Council.

The reasons for general termination included public confusion about who was responsible for highways maintenance, variations in standards and inconsistent approaches resulting in a high level of bureaucracy and increased costs. The benefits of new partnership arrangements would be to improve the speed of service, save money through one county wide contract and help clarify responsibilities providing consistent standards and improved communications.

It was resolved:

- i) To confirm the notices served to terminate District Highway Agency Agreements with Cambridge City Council, Huntingdonshire District Council and the partnership agreement with Fenland District Council in March 2004.
- ii) To agree to re-negotiating revised new partnership arrangements with each of these Councils in time to be in place when the existing arrangements are terminated on 1st April 2005 in Cambridge and Fenland and 1st April 2006 in Huntingdonshire.

(During consideration of this item, Councillor Melton left the meeting having earlier declared a prejudicial interest, as the Leader of Fenland District Council)

480. PROSPECTS FOR LEARNING: A SINGLE EDUCATION PLAN FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Cambridgeshire County Council has been invited to be the pilot authority for the development of a Single Education Plan. The development of a rationalised planning regime for local Education authorities provides a welcome opportunity to review priorities and processes in a more flexible and appropriate framework.

This report sought Cabinet's approval to an attached draft of the second edition of Prospects for Learning, as the basis for consultation with the Department for Education & Skills and Local Partners.

Comments on the text of the draft document included:

- A request to amend the wording in the last two lines of the first bullet point on page 4 of the document from "...reducing the gap between the achievement of boys and girls..." to raising the achievement of boys to the level of girls"
- Amending an error on page 5 regarding showing an incorrect level under the Key Stage 2 section which should have read 4 instead of 3 when referring to the large gap between boys and girls performance at Level 3 plus in mathematics.
- The need for a further grammar check highlighted by the sentence "Have fell slightly" under the section titled "A Level Results" near the foot of page 6.
- Questions were asked regarding whether the targets being set were realistic. In terms of GCSE results officers reported that this was an area of under achievement when comparisons were made with neighbouring authorities and therefore while the targets set out were challenging, improvements were required.
- some areas of the report did not currently include targets which would be addressed in the individual plans.

It was resolved:

- i) To approve the draft of the second edition of Prospects for Learning attached to the officers' report as a basis for consultation
- ii) To note that a revised draft would be submitted to the June Cabinet meeting, when Members would be asked to adopt the plan for recommendation to the County Council

481. POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR EARLY YEARS

This report advised Cabinet on the need to review aspects of the County Council's early years provision following the significant expansion in this provision in the voluntary and independent funded sectors and from initiatives undertaken by the County Council and partners to enhance provision for young children and families. The report sought comments on the draft policy framework which, when adopted, would provide the basis for review, rationalisation and development work over the coming three years.

The revised policy framework was designed to provide a clear basis for the review of early years provision and was to be the subject of further consultation. In preparing the draft the assumptions had been made that

- The County Council were unlikely to be able to afford early years care and education provision beyond the statutory minimum requirements
- In accordance with the County Council's values, every opportunity should be taken to ensure value for money, equity and responsiveness to parents' preferences
- The County Council should take this opportunity to contribute to the wider work on the development of more integrated services for children and their families both within the County Council and with partners

- The County Council should continue, within available resources, to seek the highest possible standards of provision and achievement.

It was resolved:

To approve the draft policy framework for early years as the basis of consultation.

482. HOME TO SCHOOL/COLLEGE TRANSPORT POLICY AND OPERATIONAL PRACTICE

This report informed Cabinet of the work that had been undertaken to date and the strategies being employed to increase income and reduce expenditure on mainstream home to school/college transport in the short, medium and longer term; and the report sought endorsement of the identified options and strategies.

It was noted that expenditure on mainstream school/college transport had shown a steady increase at both local and national level.

The report set out details of two case studies, one offering the potential of savings in 2004/05 and beyond, and one offering the potential of significant long-term savings, but only as a result of investment in infrastructure improvements e.g. a path/cycleway. One of the studies had resulted in a specific recommendation to reclassify a route as being safe for an accompanied child following the upgrading of a footpath. Also set out were opportunities presented by the announcement of a new Transport Bill to review current school transport policy and practice and in particular the provision of transport on safety grounds, discretionary transport including denominational schools and the provision of free transport for pupils on grounds of distance.

It was requested that officers should provide more details regarding the current legal requirement to provide free transport to either, a child's named catchment school, or a nearer school, if they were beyond the statutory walking distances. There had been a request for a further case study reviewing catchment areas, based on the assumption that pupils should attend the nearest school.

Amendments were proposed to the recommendations set out in the report to provide an appropriate appeals mechanism by the addition of the words to the end of existing recommendation 3 reading "and at the same time, be advised of their right of appeal against the decision to a Service Appeals Committee comprising a three members panel" and the deletion of existing recommendation 4.

It was resolved to:

Endorse the strategies outlined in the report subject to amendments made to allow an appeals procedure and to approve the revised recommendations as follows:

- i) That pupils travelling between Little Downham and the City of Ely Community College be no longer entitled to free transport on road safety grounds with effect from 1 September 2004;
- ii) That the Cabinet Member for ELH be awarded delegated powers to decide in future, in consultation with the Director of ELH, the re-designation of routes as being safe for an accompanied child based on a Road Safety Officer's assessment;
- iii) That parents/carers be given a minimum of a three months' notice of a decision to withdraw free transport and at the same time, be advised of their right of appeal against the decision to a Service Appeals Committee comprising a three members panel.
- iv) That the Director of ELH be authorised to submit an application to pilot new arrangements for school travel in response to the new Transport Bill.

483. TARGETTING FINANCIAL SUPPORT ON SCHOOLS EXPERIENCING FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES

This report set out proposals for the allocation of £556,000 of an advance of grant from the Department for Education and Skills to assist schools experiencing financial difficulties. The allocations were agreed on the basis of providing assistance first to those schools with historic deficits that management action could not have prevented.

It was resolved

- i) To approve the distribution methodology that £556,000 should be deployed to support schools with 2003/04 deficits exceeding 5% of their 2004/05 delegated budget which were not expected to otherwise recover from their deficits until 2006/07 as set out in the Annex to the officers' report.
- ii) That, in line with the recommendation of the Education Resources Service Development Group, the full £556,000 should be distributed rather than keeping a reserve for distribution based on the deficit position in the current year.
- iii) To agree the conditions of grant set out in appendix 4.1 and 4.2 of the officers' report.

484. YOUTH FACILITY PROVISION IN ST NEOTS

Following the destruction by fire of the former St Neots Youth Club three options had been identified for replacement provision in the town.

These were:

- i) Provision of one youth centre for the whole town
- ii) Provision of two centres (one each at Ernulf Community College and Longsands College)
- iii) Three centres one each at the two schools, and a new stand alone facility at Eaton Socon to be built on a site owned by St Neots Town Council.

Officers recommended option ii) and subject to the direction of Cabinet, would commission further feasibility work to allow further consideration to the request from the Town Council.

Councillor Giles a local member was invited by the Chairman to present her views regarding the proposals. She was also speaking on behalf of Councillor Hansard, who had been unable to attend due to a family bereavement. Councillor Giles and Hansard supported the Town Council proposal for three centres including a new stand-alone facility at Eaton Socon. She reported that the Town Council were confident that the centre could be built at a cost of £300,000 and were requesting a one-off capital payment of £100,000 from the County Council to support the project. She informed Cabinet that there would be no further revenue costs to the County Council with the District Council supporting the revenue costs of funding a youth worker post. In response to a question, Councillor Giles confirmed she supported the enhancement of the two school sites but not to the detriment of the possibility of having a separate facility in the Eatons.

Councillor R Clarke was also invited to present his views on the options in the report. Councillor Clarke did not support the provision of two or three centres, but supported the option for a purpose built super youth centre for the whole town, financed from the proceeds of the sale of the current site, to adjoin Longsands College. In answers to Cabinet questions on the viability of this proposal, officers reported that this proposal was not supported by either of the schools. In addition, the available funding would not be sufficient to pay for the cost of such a facility.

The provision of two youth centres supported the County Council's established policy of placing community facilities where possible and where appropriate on school sites and was supported by the two schools.

It was resolved

- i) To approve the provision of two new youth facilities in St Neots (at Ernulf Community school and Longsands College)
- ii) That a further report is prepared to the Strategic Management Team (SMT) and to the next Cabinet meeting regarding the possibility of a grant being made to the Town Council for the provision of a third facility at Eaton Socon.

485. SUMMARY DIRECTORATE PLANS

As in previous years, each Spring Directorates are required to produce a service plan outlining the key work programmes of activities to be progressed

in the forthcoming year. The plans for 2004/05 were summarised as annexes A to E for the following:

- a) Social Services
- b) Education Libraries and Heritage
- c) Environment and Transport
- d) Chief Executives
- e) Resources

The purpose of service plans was to ensure that effort was focussed on the achievements of defined and prioritised outcomes. Directorates had sought to ensure their service plans were consistent with the over-arching corporate plans Prospects 2003/07 and the Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment priority areas for improvement.

It was resolved:

To endorse the Summary Directorate Service Plans for 2004/05.

486. COMPACTS

Compacts have been defined as agreements of joint undertakings and expectations between the voluntary and statutory sectors in a specified locality. The report set out the key principles, values and text of the Cambridge City Compact between the voluntary and statutory sectors. The report sought agreement to the key principles of the first compact as the basis of further agreements with the other districts.

Cabinet agreed the recommendations on the basis that to avoid duplication officers should ensure that these compacts linked with the overall global strategic partnerships and that they should investigate whether any overlapping partnerships could be disbanded.

It was resolved

- i) To approve the Council's agreement to the Cambridge City Compact.
- ii) That Group Leaders be asked to agree the Member representation on the proposed Cambridge City Compact Joint Forum.
- iii) That Compacts and accompanying codes of practice are prepared, through the LSP Boards, for East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire and delegate to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the authority to enter into these Compacts.
- iv) The above are agreed on the basis that officers investigate what joint partnership arrangements could be discontinued bearing in mind the concerns set out in the previous Comprehensive Performance Review (CPA) report about creating too many partnerships.

487. RESHAPING THE ORGANISATION

With the County Council entering a period of significant structural change, the Chief Executive considered that it was now an appropriate time to carry out an organisational review to ensure the Council continued to put customers needs at the heart of the organisation and ensure the delivery of services aligned to the Council's core values.

The report sought the endorsement of the Cabinet to begin a process to review the organisational structure.

It was resolved:

That the Chief Executive be mandated to begin a process to consult with Members, Management College and Trade Unions and to draw up outline proposals for organisational change to be presented to Cabinet in summer 2004.

488. PERFORMANCE MONITORING ON PUBLIC SERVICE AGREEMENT (LPSA AND KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR FOR 3RD QUARTER.

Cabinet received a summary of the Council performance against Cambridgeshire's Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets and other Key Performance Indicators for the third quarter of 2003/04.

Third quarter results suggested that out of a possible £8,918,000 Reward Grant, the County Council might expect to receive between £1,886,500 and £3,915,345.

Specific points within the report were:

- Libraries' performance against indicators showed an improvement in the third quarter, which renewed belief that the 60% threshold or better would be attained in 3/4 of their indicators.
- Education targets did not lend themselves to being measured quarterly making figures difficult to report, though the provisional data appeared to be pessimistic for reaching the agreed targets. However, indications were that performance was increasing for 16+ participation in full-time education in Fenland (PSA 4.4) and might reach the 60% threshold.
- Four Environment and Transport targets had already been met or exceeded. The waste target would not be met.
- There was little change in the status of performance against Social Services targets. Some were on track, but others were unlikely to be met.

In respect of the remainder of the top 30 key performance indicators (non-PSA) set out in appendix 2 of the officers' report, 4 showed evidence that the target would be met or bettered, for 3 there was a slight under performance, for 3 it was too early to analyse and for a further 3, there was evidence that the target would not be met.

Attention was drawn to the arrangements in 2004/05 for developing the reporting of performance information.

It was orally reported that the optimistic forecast of the amount of Reward Grant that the Council might be able to claim had increased slightly, due to latest estimates on educational participation in Fenland. This would need to be subjected to further checks before the total amount of Reward Grant was known.

Oral updates indicated that in 2003/04 28.3% of primary school classes had more than 30 pupils in years 3-6, which was just outside the target of 26.5%. Motor vehicle traffic entering Cambridge crossing the River Cam had decreased from 67,743 in 2002/03 to 65,725 in 2003/04.

It was reported that the County Council (via the Head of the Youth Offending Service) was working with partners Bridgegate to obtain regular information on the Local Public Service Agreements on treating drug users (LPSA6.2).

The Chairman requested additional information on progress on the waste targets. Officers explained that it was likely that the Council would improve the proportion of waste recycled and composted compared to the previous year but was likely to narrowly miss this year's target. However it was highlighted that the Council was in the best quartile of (all England) authorities for recycling and composting performance.

It was resolved to:

Note the current performance against Local Public Service Agreement and other headline indicators.

489. DECISIONS DELEGATED TO OFFICERS AND CABINET MEMBERS

This report updated the progress on the decisions delegated to individual Cabinet Members or to officers at previous Cabinet meetings.

It was resolved:

To note the progress on delegations from Cabinet.

490. CABINET OUTLINE AGENDA

It was resolved

To note the agenda for the 18th May meeting.

Chairman
18.05.04