

CABINET: MINUTES

Date: 13th June 2006

Time: 10.00 a.m. – 11.10 a.m.

Present: Councillor J K Walters

Councillors: S F Johnstone, V H Lucas, L W McGuire L J Oliver, D R Pegram, J E Reynolds and F H Yeulett.

Also in Attendance

Councillors: M Ballard, G Kenney, S King, A Reid, and J West

* for part of the meeting only

Apologies: Councillors J A Powley and J M Tuck

179. MINUTES 23rd MAY 2006

The minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 23rd May were approved as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

180. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

181. YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN

Cabinet received a report on the updated Youth Justice Plan, an annual statutory plan required as a result of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The Plan set out how the Youth Offending Service would meet its stated objectives of reducing and preventing offending by young people in Cambridgeshire.

Cabinet noted that the level of funding for the Youth Service was 20% below that of similar authorities with referrals to the service having increased by 20% during 2005/06. The key risk identified was that performance might not improve or could reduce further if funding from partners and other sources was not secured in 2007/08. Cabinet therefore requested that for the report to Council, It was important to highlight the service restrictions as a result of the funding shortfall and to also illustrate the areas where progress could not be made for the same reasons.

The original recommendation in the officer's report was revised to recognise that as a statutory plan, it required to be approved by full Council.

It was resolved:

To agree the contents of the Youth Justice Plan 2006/07 and to recommend that Council approves the Plan subject to the following:

- a) Providing additional information on the impact caused, resulting from shortfalls in funding on the priorities being set.
- b) Setting out the priorities not being pursued as a consequence of reduced funding.

182. OFFICE ACCOMODATION STRATEGY

This strategy had been developed in order to meet the County Council's office infrastructure requirements and to enable it to deliver its constantly developing modernisation agenda. The strategy aimed to achieve consensus on the changes needed and to set out a structured way forward to implement the changes. The key benefits would be better working environments for staff and significant efficiency savings from more effective use of space. The review recommended establishing a target for an overall desk to employee ratio of 70%.

Cabinet noted that the County Council could not commit any significant resource to facilitate the process and therefore it was recognised that achievability and affordability would need to be monitored closely with expectations managed appropriately.

As a result, far reaching changes to office accommodation and work style would be required in order to free up resources – both to deliver the cash savings required and to provide the resources required for re-investment in, for example, new layouts, meeting rooms, furniture and equipment. Cabinet noted that adequate attention would need to be given to developing investment/disinvestment strategies and cost planning and that a pragmatic and realistic approach was required to its strategic implementation, given the overall budget pressures.

Councillor King was invited to speak on behalf of the member-led review undertaken by a sub group of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee. The Sub-Group had produced a review report for the Committee that included 20 key recommendations, as set out in the report to Cabinet. They had received the full support of the Corporate Services Service Development Group and he commended them to the Cabinet. He paid tribute to all the officers involved and the members

on the sub group in particular, the Chairman, Councillor Moss-Eccardt and Vice-Chairman Councillor West.

Cabinet fully supported all the recommendations brought forward by the scrutiny committee and highlighted that the strategy would also go a long way to meeting the environmental challenges facing the County Council, including the need to reduce the number of people travelling into Cambridge and allowing more people to work from their homes. These benefits required to be made clearer in the strategy, including the intention to increase the provision for disabled access.

It was resolved:

To approve the draft Office Accommodation Strategy and recommendations as set out in the officer's report.

183. FINANCIAL OUTTURN REPORT 2005/06

Cabinet received a report which:

- outlined the 2005/06 financial results for revenue, capital and trading units;
- considered the position on balances, carry forwards, reserves and treasury management and prudential regime;
- reviewed the position on debt management and prompt payment.

Cabinet noted that the approved Council Budget for the year was £509.907m, which had been increased by transfers from carry forwards of £820k, making a total budget of £510.726. A further £11m of schools carry-forwards had also been made available for their use.

The overall position for Services (excluding Education Self-Managing Institutions) was actual spending of £291.7m against a budget of £292.7m. The underspending of £1m represented 0.4% of budget. £78k of the underspend was to be transferred to Carry-Forwards Reserves in accordance with the Council's Constitution, whilst £972k would be transferred to County Council balances.

The final capital spending was £95.8m, which was £13.3m under the revised budget. It was explained that this did not represent an under-spend on schemes, rather that the timing of the spend had not occurred in the year originally forecast. It was noted that whilst spending had slipped on schemes funded through specific ring-fenced funding, this has not been the case for those schemes funded through general sources. The actual position as set out in the officer's report necessitated a prudential borrowing requirement to fund the shortfall of £1.5 million.

Cabinet noted that as a result of the continued deterioration in the trading position of several major trading units, accumulated deficits had reached a level that could not reasonably be expected to be recovered over a three year timeframe without passing a significant burden on to operational services. It was therefore recommended that, pending a full review of trading units, that £1.028m of County Fund gain made this year was deployed to an earmarked reserve that could be used to address the underlying problems of the traded services, by a mixture of investment and/or write off. As the Constitution ordinarily required underspends to be transferred to balances, a recommendation was required to the Audit and Accounts Committee in order to create a reserve to offset risks associated with losses incurred by the trading units to be funded from an underspend identified on debt charges.

It was made clear that whilst there had been some underspends in debt charges due to one-off factors, the financial position in the coming financial years was likely to be extremely tight due to expected severe Central Government budget settlements, and careful budget management would be necessary. It was noted that a review of trading units was currently still being finalised.

It was further noted that:

- The County Council's Fund balance (the general reserves) stood at £5.013m amounting to 1.8% of net revenue expenditure. No changes were proposed in the operation of the council's reserves.
- In terms of Treasury Management Activities, interest payments were underspent as a result of debt levels remaining below the level assumed in the budget for the year.
- There had been an increase in the authority's loan debt of £20.157m over the previous year mainly due to the use of borrowing to finance capital expenditure.
- Financing costs were below the approved limit because of an underspend on debt charges with all debt levels being within approved limits.
- The total amount of debt outstanding for more than six months at the end of March 2006 was £699k with the target of reducing debt to £494k not having been achieved for the reasons set out in the officer's report.
- 97.9% of undisputed invoices were paid within thirty days, which was 2.9% above the target set as a key Best Value Performance Indicator. Cabinet congratulated officers on the continued excellent performance, which had seen increases for the last quarter figures of 97.9% in February and 98.7% in March.

It was resolved to:

- i) Note the revenue expenditure of Services in 2005/06 (Sections 2 & 3 and Appendices 1 & 2 of the officer's report)

- ii) Note the report on capital spending and financing in 2005/06 (Section 4), and to approve the use of prudential borrowing to bridge the gap between capital spending and financing across financial years (paragraph 4.5 of the officer's report)
- iii) Note the report on trading units' performance (Section 5 and Appendix 3 the officer's report)
- iv) Recommend to Audit and Accounts Committee the approval of the creation of an earmarked reserve for traded services to offset the risks associated with trading losses, funded from the underspend on debt charges (pending the outcome of the trading service review) (paragraph 5.5 of the officer's report)
- v) Approve the reserves and carry forwards (Sections 6, 7, 8, and Appendix 4 of the officer's report),
- vi) Note the report on debt management (section 10 of the officer's report), prompt payment (section 11 of the officer's report)

184. EDUCATIONAL PROVISION IN RESPONSE TO THE PLANNED DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CAMBRIDGE SOUTHERN FRINGE

This report to Cabinet:

- Advised of the identified educational requirements for the developments planned for the Cambridge Southern Fringe.
- Sought approval to proposals for early years, primary and secondary provision to serve existing and new communities in the south of the City; and
- Sought approval to consult on proposals for changes to secondary school catchment areas linked to the establishment of an 11-16 Village College in the Southern Fringe.

Councillor Heathcock one of the local members had provided comments for Cabinet's attention highlighting the ongoing difficult financial position facing Queen Edith's Primary School, resulting in inadequate resources being available to provide the level of maintenance appropriate for such an old school.

Councillor Ballard spoke briefly stating that the proposals to secure effective integration in relation to the secondary educational requirements would have significant implications for the provision of education and community provision in the Coleridge electoral division. He urged that an early, in-depth local consultation exercise should be undertaken. He made the point that appropriate views on sports and

leisure and community-learning facilities required far greater local consultation than just consulting with secondary schools' feeder schools.

Cabinet noted that the level of major urban expansion identified for the area of Cambridge known as the Southern Fringe would create a demand for sufficient places across the school age range for around an additional four forms of entry (4 FE) to schools. It was noted that existing schools would not be able to cope with the anticipated number of pupils generated from the development.

The Authority's planned response to the need for additional primary school places was to expand Fawcett Primary to 420-places (2FE) and to establish two new schools, one in the Clay Farm/Showground development area, and the other in the Trumpington Meadows. Both would serve a defined catchment area. Officers had also identified the need for an extended services secondary school to be established in the Southern Fringe in the Clay Farm/Showground development area with a location close to Fawcett Primary School, which was considered to be in the best interests of the community.

It was recognised however that the onus would remain on the County Council to demonstrate the educational need for a secondary school to the satisfaction of the developers. In addition, to create a school of the size considered to be educationally and financially viable, the school's catchment area would need to extend into the City, necessitating a review of catchment areas and a re-configuration of the existing pattern of provision in order to ensure that there was an appropriate balance between the number of places available at each school, the geographical size of their catchments, and the number of children seeking places from within them. In planning educational provision to serve the Southern Fringe, new catchment areas would need to be defined to take into account projected numbers, ease of travel for parents and the potential impact on neighbouring schools.

A member made the point that he hoped the Cambridge Professional Development Centre could be taken into consideration when considering sites for a further school.

It was noted that the intention would be to ensure that any new school's building design was sympathetic to the surrounding area and would be in line with Cambridge City Council's visual impact planning requirements.

It was resolved:

- i) To note the identified educational requirements for the developments planned for the Cambridge Southern Fringe;

- ii) To endorse:
- The expansion of Fawcett Primary School to provide for 420 children aged 4-11;
 - The establishment of two new primary schools in the Cambridge Southern Fringe;
 - The establishment of a secondary school in the Cambridge Southern Fringe to be promoted as an 11-16 Village College;
 - Consultation to be undertaken on proposals for changes to Cambridge City secondary school catchment areas.
- iii) Note the requirement to enter into a competition for new and replacement secondary schools.

185. HUNTINGDON TO ST IVES BUS PRIORITY MEASURES

Cabinet received a report to consider a programme for the delivery of bus priority measures between Huntingdon and St Ives and to approve the acquisition of land required for the proposed contraflow bus lane on Walden Road, Huntingdon.

A package of bus priority measures had been developed, designed to minimise the impact of congestion on bus journey times and reliability. The measures would extend the benefits of the proposed Cambridgeshire Guided Busway from St Ives to Huntingdon and contribute to the delivery of the Huntingdon & Godmanchester Transport Strategy by enhancing the quality of bus services to and through Huntingdon. A more detailed coloured map was tabled to aid Cabinet members understanding of the schemes.

The provision of the bus lane and cycle path would require land outside the highway boundary. All but a short length of the required land had been secured by agreement with the developer who was currently developing the adjoining land. The remaining section of land was a small part of the yard of the Falcon Public House. It was noted that the owners had been approached and had indicated a willingness to sell the land. Cabinet authority was still sought to approve the use of Compulsory Purchase powers should negotiations be ultimately unsuccessful.

It was confirmed that the Area Joint Committee on 5th June and the “In Your Patch” meeting held the day before Cabinet, had both fully supported the detailed design proposals for the provision of a contra-flow bus lane on Walden Road Huntingdon between George Street and Huntingdon Bus Station. It was reported that some concerns had been raised at the “In Your Patch” meeting regarding congestion in the Hinchingsbrooke area, as a result of a bus lane being provided from Hinchingsbrooke Park Road to Brampton Road.

It was resolved to approve:

- i) Subject to public consultation on detailed design, the provision of a contra-flow bus lane on Walden Road, Huntingdon between George Street and the Huntingdon Bus Station, as set out in Plan 1 of the report.
- ii) The purchase of the area of land indicated on Plan 1 attached to the officer's report from the Falcon Public House, Huntingdon using compulsory purchase powers, if necessary;
- iii) Subject to public consultation on detailed design and the availability of sufficient funds, the provision of a bus lane from Hinchingsbrooke Park Road to Brampton Road, as shown on Plan 2 attached to the officer's report; and
- iv) Subject to public consultation on detailed design, the provision of a bus and cycle link on Old Houghton Road, as shown on Plan 3 of the officer's report, as the next priority, or in the event that the provision of the contra-flow bus lane on Walden Road is delayed.

186. SAFE EMPLOYMENT POST BICHARD

Following the tragic events in Soham involving the murder of two schoolgirls by the school caretaker and the subsequent Inquiry and recommendations made by Sir Michael Bichard two years ago, the County Council had previously agreed to take action to ensure that the systems for the recruitment and selection and management of staff afforded the maximum protection to children, young people and vulnerable adults.

The report now presented to Cabinet provided details of the progress being made for ensuring measures were in place to protect children and vulnerable adults in Cambridgeshire. The report highlighted the work of the Safe Employment Group established to take forward recommendations. Cabinet members noted that there were still four outstanding actions that required to be completed regarding recommendations made in respect of "Safe Recruitment to Schools". Cabinet therefore requested that officers should prepare a timetable with milestones for their resolution, with the aim that all four actions should have been completed before the major conference in November. The report provided details of the conference which was being hosted by the Local Safeguarding Board.

It was resolved:

- i) To note the contents of the report providing an update on progress with implementing the recommendations of the Bichard Inquiry and safe employment.
- ii) To request that milestones should be provided in relation to the four outstanding recommendations on an earlier "Safe Recruitment in Schools" audit with the aim of completion before November and with regular updates provided to Cabinet.
- iii) Support the Local Safeguarding Children Board conference on safe employment in November 2006.

187. CAMBRIDGESHIRE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) STRATEGY

Cabinet received a report on the proposed IT Strategy for 2006-2010 which incorporated the overarching IT objectives and priorities for the authority, as well as the key drivers and IT priorities for each of the recently established offices. The IT Strategy had been developed in conjunction with the People and Office Accommodation Strategies to support new ways of working and to build on and further develop the use of IT. In answer to a question raised, it was confirmed that the strategy did not require to be agreed by Central Government.

Issues were raised regarding the fact that there was still insufficient contingency arrangements in place in the event of a major IT failure, following an earlier Cabinet decision not to fund the provision of a secondary data centre at a cost of £1m. The original decision had been taken on the basis that the cost could not be justified, as finding the necessary monies would have required a reduction in the provision of front line services. Officers have been asked to investigate the possibility of providing other solutions, including sharing other partners existing off-site facilities, using individual back up servers or commissioning such an arrangement with an outside provider.

As the IT Strategy was linked to many other strategies which had not been fully explained in the report, a request was made to include a topic at a future Member Seminar to help explain the links between the various strategies and how the various components worked together. A request was also made to provide more emphasis on explaining issues of interoperability of systems within the strategy, in relation to other partners' systems. This was particularly important following the previous communications problems between the County Council and the Health Authority SWIFT and FAMIS computer systems.

It was resolved:

- i) To approve the Information Technology Strategy for the authority as set out in the report, subject to the strategy making reference to the inter-operability between different systems used by the County Council.
- ii) That due to the complexity of the various interrelated strategies referred to in the report, it would be useful for the IT Strategy to be a topic at a future Member's Seminar.
- iii) To ask the officers to continue to pursue solutions, possibly with other partners, to provide an alternative data centre in the event of a disaster occurring at the key data centre located in the Octagon.

188. PRINGLE HOUSE – EXEMPTION REQUEST FROM NORMAL COMPETITION REQUIREMENTS UNDER CONTRACT REGULATIONS

Cabinet noted that the scheme of delegation in respect of agreeing exemptions to contract regulations limited the powers granted to Deputy Chief Executives to a value of £40,000. As the current contract value for the service provided at Pringle House was £586,882 for the period 2006/09, Cabinet approval was sought to waive contract regulations. This was sought to ensure the most appropriate form of purchasing arrangement was made available to enable continuity of provision for vulnerable Cambridgeshire residents who had enduring mental health needs associated with having a psychotic illness.

It was noted that Pringle House had operated as a registered residential care home for 15 years, providing high quality services for people with mental health needs purchased by the County Council on a spot purchase basis. With the support of Adult Support Services, Pringle House had deregistered and was now providing services within the model of supported living. This model gave the people receiving the service more control and security, with tenancy agreements being put in place between them and the landlord. The service provided by Pringle House continued to support people throughout a 24 hour period and involved the provision of support within the home setting and support to access facilities within the community.

It was considered that the move to a supported living model was a very positive change for Cambridgeshire residents living at Pringle House

and fitted the strategic intentions across Adult Support Services, to support people in their own/rented home.

It was resolved:

To grant an exemption to normal contract regulations in order to secure the service provided at Pringle House as part of the local provision for people with mental health problems resident in Cambridgeshire.

189. ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS FOR NEW BUILDINGS

Cabinet received a report providing information on the proposed approach to responding to a motion passed by Council on Environmental Standards for New Buildings.

The motion agreed by the Council on 16th May called on Cabinet to ensure that for each future new school or other building to be built by the Council, the comparative cost of achieving 'Excellent' British Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) rating should be calculated and presented as part of the procurement process. Such comparisons should include capital costs and lifetime running costs, and should take account of any projected changes in energy prices.

The proposals in the officer's report recommended that the relevant Service Development Groups should first of all receive a report following further officer investigations in order to consider the cost implications of adopting such a change of policy and whether they were practicable and cost effective. As Cabinet Members were concerned regarding the potential cost implications, they were happy to agree to the SDGs looking into the issues in more detail, before a report came back to Cabinet on any recommendations to change existing Council policy.

It was resolved:

To endorse the approach that the Corporate Services SDG and to Children and Young People's Services Planning and Development SDG consider the practicalities of calculating the cost of achieving an excellent/other rating in respect of the British Research Institute Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (Breeam) environmental performance rating for all future new schools/other Council buildings as part of the procurement process with a report on the outcomes to come back to Cabinet.

190. DRAFT CABINET AGENDA PLAN 11TH JULY 2006

Cabinet noted the agenda plan with the following amendments:

Reports that had moved from the July to the 5th September meeting:

Highways Operational Issues

Risk Management Annual Review

Additional reports to those listed below that required to be added:

1) Invest to Transform

2) St Neots Cycle Path Bridge

3) Rural Strategy

Due to the size of the agenda for the July Cabinet meeting, the Chairman requested that all report authors should justify why the reports were required to go to the July meeting and to look to moving those that were not urgent to the 5th September Cabinet meeting.

Chairman
13th June 2006