

CABINET: MINUTES

Date: 15th June 2004.

Time: 10.00 a.m. – 10.45 a.m.

Present: Councillor J K Walters (Chairman).

Councillors: S F Johnstone, V H Lucas, L J Oliver,
J A Powley, J R Reynolds and F H Yeulett.

Also in Attendance

Councillors S V Brinton and J L Gluza.

Apologies for Absence: Councillors A K Melton, D R Pegram and R Wilkinson.

502. MINUTES

It was resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18th May 2004 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

503. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

504. ISSUES ARISING FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

There were no matters from Scrutiny Committees to report, other than those referred to elsewhere on the agenda.

505. PREMATURE RETIREMENT IN THE INTERESTS OF THE EFFICIENT EXERCISE OF THE AUTHORITY'S FUNCTIONS

Cabinet considered a report that set out proposed changes to the Council's Premature Retirement in the Interests of the Efficient Exercise of the Authority's Functions (PRIEEAF) Scheme.

It was noted that the existing PRIEEAF Scheme had been introduced in April 1991. It provided a means by which employees over 50 years of age could retire and receive their pension benefits early, provided that they had sufficient Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Service and satisfied certain criteria. The Scheme had been the subject of some concern as there was some evidence of managers having used PRIEEAF to manage the exit strategies for 'difficult' employees, rather than tackle issues through disciplinary/work performance procedures. In the mid-1990s the District

Auditor began to scrutinise the use of PRIEEAF and approval procedures were subsequently strengthened in response to growing concerns about the long-term drain on the LGPS and Council funds.

Although use of the Scheme had been limited in recent years, it was considered necessary to formally review it. This had led to a revised PRIEEAF Scheme being prepared, which was designed to manage the financial implications, reflect the Council's developing performance culture and meet District Audit expectations. The main changes related to:

- Applying PRIEEAF only in circumstances where no other procedure existed to effect the dismissal;
- Removal of the facility for employees to request PRIEEAF; and
- Employees retired under PRIEEAF receiving statutory pension benefits, with no Compensatory Added Years (CAY) being awarded.

In discussing the revised scheme, Cabinet expressed concern about the proposal to completely remove the option of awarding CAY. While it was accepted that this facility should not be widely used, it was felt that there could be exceptional circumstances where it might be appropriate. A high-level approval process would ensure use of this facility was closely monitored. It was suggested this could involve all cases being subject to approval by the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive and the Council's Monitoring Officer.

It was resolved:

- (i) To endorse the proposed amendments to the scheme, as set out in paragraph 3.2 of the report, subject to the inclusion of provision to award Compensatory Added Years in exceptional circumstances only;
- (ii) To delegate authority to the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive to propose a process by which these exceptional cases will be considered, which will be incorporated into the proposed new PRIEEAF Scheme; and
- (iii) To **RECOMMEND** the new PRIEEAF Scheme, incorporating the proposed changes, to Council for approval, at its meeting on 27th July 2004.

506. PROSPECTS FOR LEARNING

In April 2004, Cabinet approved the draft Single Education Plan "Prospects for Learning" to be used as a basis for consultation with key stakeholders. It was noted that the consultation process was now complete and a revised Plan, amended to reflect the feedback received, was being submitted to Cabinet for consideration, prior to it being formally approved by Council.

The Department of Education and Skills (DfES) had invited the Council to be a pilot authority for the development of a Single Education Plan. It had been prepared in the context of a need to rationalise existing Plans, rather than

introduce new priorities and targets, except where these were required to meet new circumstances and expectations. As a result of participating in the pilot, the Council was relieved of all other national educational planning requirements.

It was noted that no major issues had arisen as a result of the consultation process and the revised Plan was not significantly different from the earlier version, with no changes having been made to the priority areas identified. Some minor changes of an editorial nature would be required before the Plan was finalised for submission to Council for formal approval.

It was resolved:

To endorse the draft Single Education Plan "Prospects for Learning" (second edition) and **RECOMMEND** it to Council for formal approval at its meeting on 27th July 2004.

507. OfSTED INSPECTION OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL AS EDUCATION AUTHORITY

Cabinet received a report, which summarised the key points raised in the report from the Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) on the work of the County Council as Local Education Authority (LEA). The report also incorporated comments made by the Education, Libraries and Heritage Scrutiny Committee.

The OfSTED Inspection took place in January 2004 and was one of the first conducted using new processes and criteria. This covered aspects of the LEA's work not previously included in the inspection. The main focus was on improvements since the last inspection, overall effectiveness and capacity to improve further. The main conclusions of the Inspection were that:

- Overall progress since the last inspection had been highly satisfactory and particularly good in support for school improvement and Special Educational Needs;
- Cambridgeshire was a highly satisfactory LEA, whose performance in almost all services and functions was at least satisfactory and, in many services, good or very good; and
- The LEA's capacity for further improvement was judged to be highly satisfactory.

At its meeting on 14th May 2004, the Education, Libraries and Heritage Scrutiny Committee had considered an analysis of the key issues arising from the inspection and commented on the proposed response. Cabinet's attention was drawn to the issues raised, which focussed on partnership with schools, special educational needs: value for money, school place planning and pace of change. Work was underway to prepare an action plan setting out the proposed response to the recommendations contained in the OfSTED report. This would incorporate issues raised by the Scrutiny Committee and would be presented to Cabinet for endorsement once completed.

It was resolved:

- (i) To note the key points raised in the report from OfSTED on the work of the Council as Local Education Authority and the comments of the Education, Libraries and Heritage Scrutiny Committee; and
- (ii) That the proposed Action Plan addressing the recommendations of the OfSTED report be presented to Cabinet for approval at its meeting on 13th July 2004.

508. NORTH CAMBRIDGE PRIMARY EDUCATION PROVISION

Cabinet considered a report, which detailed proposals for the establishment of a new Community Primary School at Arbury Camp in Cambridge and the subsequent requirement to publish Statutory Notices to facilitate the necessary changes.

It was noted that the School Organisation Service Development Group (SDG) had considered the need to secure educational provision for children living in the Arbury Camp area, where development of an additional 900 housing units was planned. Following extensive consultation and consideration of a number of options, it was proposed to establish a new 120 Community Primary School to serve the area on a site located at the western end of the proposed development.

It was resolved:

To approve the publication of a Public Notice proposing the establishment of a new 120-place Community Primary School with effect from 1st September 2006, to serve primarily residents of the housing developments at Arbury Camp Cambridge.

509. TRADING STANDARDS ADVICE AND ENQUIRIES POLICY

Cabinet considered a report setting out plans to introduce an Advice and Enquiries Policy for the Trading Standards Service. The aim of the new Policy was to clarify the level of support available, with a view to balancing the provision of a quality service with the need to manage consumer expectations and make the most efficient use of available resources.

It was noted that officers had worked with Cambridgeshire Direct to open up access to the services provided by Trading Standards and it was likely that this would be extended through Consumer Direct. Data showed a 19% increase in the number of complaints and enquiries received when comparing figures for April 2003 and April 2004. Without a corresponding increase in available resources it was therefore necessary to explore new ways of working in order to meet this increased demand.

The new Policy would enable available resources to be targeted at priority areas of work. The aim was to provide a prompt and appropriate initial response to all callers by supporting the Contact Centre with Trading Standards experts from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. Monday to Friday. By doing this 75% of all enquiries would receive an initial response on the day it was received and 100% within three days. Individual complaints would only be investigated where they were of a sufficiently serious nature, or the complainant met certain clearly defined criteria.

The Community and Economic Development SDG had considered the proposed Policy and supported its introduction.

It was resolved:

To approve the adoption of an Advice and Enquiries Handling Policy within Trading Standards, which has the key objectives as detailed in paragraph 5.0 of the report.

510. CAMBRIDGE INFORMATION SIGNING SYSTEM

Cabinet considered a report detailing proposals for the development of a new information signing system for Cambridge. It was hoped that such a system would assist in managing traffic during construction of the Grand Arcade. The system would be funded through a combination of developer and Local Transport Plan funding.

The proposals had been the subject of extensive consultation during January 2004, with over 40,000 copies of an information leaflet and questionnaire being distributed. As the scope of the proposed signing system straddled the South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City boundary, the proposals and outcome of the consultation were considered by both the South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City Area Joint Committees, both of which were supportive, subject to further limited consultation on specific matters.

It was noted that following completion of the Area Joint Committee process, officers had started to identify locations for additional signs, taking into account the potential effect on neighbouring properties. This included consultation with local Members. Arising from a meeting with Councillors representing the Newnham Ward, City Councillor Sian Reid had asked for further consultation on the principles of signing in that Ward. Cabinet was invited to consider this request in the light of support for the proposals from both Area Joint Committees and earlier extensive consultation on these proposals.

It was resolved:

- (i) To approve the implementation of the Information Signing Scheme; and
- (ii) Support further work between officers and local Members to resolve any issues arising over the location of individual signs, balancing visual intrusion with value for money.

511. SOCIAL SERVICES BUDGETARY CONTROL

Cabinet received a report detailing progress with the implementation of the recommendations arising from the review of Social Services budgetary control arrangements undertaken by Councillor Pegram.

It was noted that overall progress had been good. Key developments included the launch of the corporate Improving Financial Management project and the implementation of the Commitment Record Information Process (CRIP) project for domiciliary care. Work was also underway to refine the Directorate's financial forecasting methodology, to improve both budget setting and in-year monitoring. It was acknowledged that there remained a great deal of work to be done. In particular, weaknesses such as lack of financial training and concerns over financial management skills and competencies could not be addressed immediately. In recognition of this, arrangements had been put in place to minimise the risk of financial error and misreporting.

The closedown of the 2003/04 Social Services Budget was almost complete and showed a year-end overspend of £4.66m. This represented a reduction in the forecast £4.8m overspend reported in March 2004.

It was resolved:

- (i) To note progress made to date with the implementation of the recommendations arising from Councillor Pegram's review of budgetary control arrangements in the Social Services Directorate; and
- (ii) That regular quarterly monitoring reports be submitted to Social Services Spokesmen, with a further monitoring report being submitted to Cabinet in twelve months time.

512. DELEGATIONS

Cabinet received a report, which set out progress with those matters that had been delegated to individual Members or officers.

It was resolved:

To note the delegations made by Cabinet to individual Cabinet Members, or officers, to make decisions/take actions on its behalf, which have been, or are still to be discharged.

513. CABINET OUTLINE AGENDA

It was resolved:

To note the outline agenda for the forthcoming Cabinet meeting on Tuesday 13th July 2004.

Chairman