

**LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE –
ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15**

To: Council

Date: 12th May 2015

From: Councillor Steve Count, Leader of the Council and
Chairman of the General Purposes Committee

Purpose: To consider the Annual Report 2014/15 for General
Purposes Committee.

Recommendation: Council is recommended to note the General Purposes
Committee Annual Report 2014/15.

<i>Officer contact:</i>		<i>Member contact</i>	
Name:	Sue Grace	Name:	Councillor Steve Count
Post:	Corporate Director: Customer Service & Transformation	Portfolio:	Chairman, General Purposes Committee
Email:	sue.grace@cambridgeshire.gov.uk	Email:	steve.count@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel:	01223 699188	Tel:	01223 699173

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Councillor Steve Count is the Leader of Cambridgeshire County Council, and the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee (GPC). The GPC was established following the May 2014 annual meeting when the Council resolved to convert from a Leader Cabinet form of governance to a Committee System.

2 COUNCIL LEADERSHIP IN 2014/15

- 2.1 Over the previous year the Council has met regularly to provide leadership against the backdrop of financial austerity and increasing demand for public services. Throughout 2014/15 and the previous years, the Council has made savings of over £100m, and a further £119m savings are forecast for the next five years.
- 2.2 Despite the financial challenges we have had this past year, we also have much to be proud of. The City Deal arrangement has meant that in partnership with Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire we have negotiated around £500m of devolved funding from Government that we can invest in priority transport and housing schemes. We also secured fairer funding for our school children, rated as 'good' under the new Ofsted inspection criteria and have launched a new approach to Social Work Practice in Adult Social Care and Older People's Services called 'Transforming Lives'.
- 2.3 Even though we still face huge financial challenges, building of key infrastructure for Cambridgeshire remains critical now and for future generations. Our capital programme spans the next ten years; we will invest a further £436m in building new schools and expanding school provision. We will spend a further £143m on roads, footpaths and cycle paths. We will also be continuing to invest in major transport schemes like Ely Crossing, the A14 upgrade and King's Dyke crossing, as well as £100m over the next five years via City deal schemes.
- 2.4 In July 2014 Council unanimously approved a motion, submitted by Councillor Count, which compelled the organisation to do more to tackle deprivation across the County. The motion referenced the contrasting nature of Cambridgeshire's communities, and the fact that some parts of the County remain within the most deprived in the country. Since the motion was agreed, Service Committees have responded by adopting new targets and performance measures for tackling deprivation.
- 2.5 The whole Council is united behind the need to explore new relationships with partners and communities to find solutions to these challenges. In October 2014 Councillor Criswell put a motion to Council that outlined the significant challenges facing local public services and called on the Chief Executive to explore a range of options for transformation. This motion was unanimously agreed by Council and has prompted new collaboration with partners alongside new ways of working within the organisation.

3 GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE WORKLOAD

- 3.1 The committee comprises the following Members:

Councillor Steve Count (Chairman) Mac McGuire (Vice Chairman), Anna Bailey, Ian Bates, Killian Bourke, David Brown, Paul Bullen, Edward Cearns, Steve Criswell,

Roger Hickford, John Hipkin, Maurice Leeke, Tony Orgee, Peter Reeve, Sandra Rylance, Paul Sales, and Joan Whitehead.

- 3.2 Over the last twelve months the committee has met ten times (including April 2015). Section 2 of the report highlights a number of significant issues considered by the committee during this period.

4 Business Planning

- 4.1 The General Purposes Committee has an oversight and coordinating role in the annual setting of the Council's Business Plan. The 2015/16 Business Plan was adopted by the Council in February 2015 following many months of engagement, consultation, and discussion across the Council, and with our partners, stakeholders and our residents.
- 4.2 It was the first for many years to be presented by a committee that is democratically proportionate to that of the Council and therefore represents a Business Plan developed with closer and stronger cross party political engagement. To achieve this, the General Purposes Committee worked together and with the Service Committees to encourage and facilitate the development of the Business Plan.
- 4.3 The Committee System was implemented to encourage more open democracy and to allow more councillors to participate in the debate. This new way of working has transformed our decision making, enabling the diverse viewpoints and needs of our communities to be more involved in the detail and way our decisions are made.

5 Asset Management

- 5.1 Over the last year GPC have considered a number of issues around the best use of Council property and land assets. Some of the key items considered this past year include the use of the Estover Road site, the Soham Northern Gateway and Castle Court. GPC consideration has explored both the community and economic benefit that such assets represent, and taken into account representations received by local residents and community groups. The disposal of Castle Court has been a highlight as this will mean that the council will be able to unlock a significant revenue stream for the authority to use on providing essential services and help to provide much needed student accommodation. Study Inn Group now plans on converting the old office block into student flats, with a planning application due to be submitted imminently.

6 Customer Service and Transformation

- 6.1 As well as its oversight role, the General Purposes Committee is also the Service Committee for Customer and Transformation, and LGSS Managed Services. This year the Committee has overseen major changes to these directorates in order to meet the organisation's savings targets, alongside supporting the Council to deliver across all service areas.
- 6.2 In July the Committee appointed Councillor Steve Criswell as the Council's Localism Champion in recognition of the importance of localism in achieving the Council's ambitions. Councillor Criswell has led work with Members and officers in this capacity, which will continue with a session for Members immediately following this meeting of Council.

7 Acquisitions

- 7.1 GPC have also approved some key acquisitions including the former Huntingdonshire Regional College site in St Neots and acquiring a property in Ely for the Archives Service.

8 Treasury Management

- 8.1 The Committee oversees the management of the Council's investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.
- 8.2 During the year the Committee ensured the Council operated within the Treasury limits and Prudential Indicators set out within the Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) and in compliance with the Council's Treasury Management Practices. Additionally recommending the TMSS strategy for 2015/16 to the Council.
- 8.3 The principles of a £4m loan to the Arthur Rank Hospice Charity were approved by GPC in November. The Charity will build a new 24 bed hospice with the proceeds from the loan and other fundraising, on land leased from the Council in Shelford. The loan is expected to be drawn down in November 2015 and February 2016.
- 8.4 A treasury risk review group was setup at the request of GPC in January to consider the Council's appetite for risk in relation to treasury management activities. Two meetings were held and the group concluded, after exploration of a number of different strategies, that the existing strategy and investment policy reflected the Council's appetite for risk.

9 LOOKING FORWARD TO 2015/16

- 9.1 The achievements that the Council and the GPC have made over the last year are testament to the ability of the organisation to respond positively in a tough climate. Councillors and officers alike have embraced the need to rethink and redesign what we do for the future, alongside the need to provide vital services to our residents here and now. Significantly, this will involve moving towards outcome-based planning and budgeting in 2015/16 as first signaled in Councillor Criswell's motion to Council in October 2014. The Council and the General Purposes Committee are ambitious about the way in which we can shape the future success of our communities in the year ahead.

Source Documents	Location
Agenda and Minutes General Purposes Committee	http://www2.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/CommitteeMinutes/Committees/Committee.aspx?committeeID=75