

## **CABINET: MINUTES**

**Date:** 15<sup>th</sup> August 2011

**Time:** 10.00 a.m. – 10.20 a.m.

**Present:** Chairman: Councillor N Clarke

Councillors D Brown, S Count, S Criswell, M Curtis, D Harty, C Hutton  
and M Shuter

**Apologies:** Councillors I Bates and L W McGuire

**Also present:** Councillor K Bourke, M Smith, S Whitebread and K Wilkins

### **423. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Criswell declared a personal interest in the discussion recorded under Minute 425, 'Somersham Library: Lease to the Parish Council at Less than Best Consideration', as a member of the Friends of Somersham Library and as the Chairman of Somersham Parish Council. He spoke but did not vote on this item.

### **424. INVESTMENT IN SUPERFAST BROADBAND**

The Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance, Councillor Count, introduced a report proposing investment in superfast broadband for the whole County. He explained that investment would lead to a fast and reliable service for as many people as possible. There would be significant benefits for residents, Council services, partners and business.

Speaking as Chairman, the Leader of the Council, Councillor Clarke, proposed an amendment to recommendation a) of the published report, to increase the total local investment from £12 million to £20 million. He explained that this would ensure that the initiative could still proceed, even if Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) funding were withdrawn by central Government. The Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance provided assurance that this would not jeopardise the Council's BDUK bid, which would succeed if funding were available and the scheme's requirements were met.

The Leader of the Council reported comments submitted by Councillor Jenkins, including support for the initiative; local broadband issues in Oakington and Orchard Park; and a call for planners to ensure that high quality broadband was an integral part of all new developments. The Leader of the Council confirmed that the issue raised by Councillor Jenkins regarding how the planning system dealt with the provision of broadband to new communities was being addressed.

Several Cabinet members spoke in support of the proposal. Members were reminded that the Council's financial contribution would be provided through prudential borrowing, which could not be used to meet ongoing revenue costs. This meant that the initiative would not be removing funding from other services, such as adult social care; rather, it would be improving services, increasing prosperity and promoting self-sufficiency to the benefit of all.

It was resolved:

- a) To make an investment in superfast broadband across the County, potentially in collaboration with District authorities and private businesses, with the total investment not exceeding £20 million
- b) To delegate to the LGSS Director of Finance and the Executive Director: Environment Services to agree the detailed terms for this investment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance and the Cabinet Member for Growth and Planning
- c) To agree to fund the investment from prudential borrowing and for the cost of this borrowing to be initially met by the deployment of reserves, with the long-term funding of the project being set out in the 2012/13 Integrated Plan.

**425. SOMERSHAM LIBRARY: LEASE TO THE PARISH COUNCIL AT LESS THAN BEST CONSIDERATION**

The Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance, Councillor Count, presented a proposal to lease the former Somersham library to Somersham Parish Council at less than best consideration. Members noted that the former library was used by volunteers to run a Local Access Point, one of the most successful in the County. The current lease was due for renewal and as the Friends of Somersham Library would be unable to meet commercial rates, it was proposed to agree a short-term lease at a peppercorn rent. This would enable the service to continue to be delivered, pending the outcome of the wider Libraries review.

The Cabinet agreed that achieving 'best value' should encompass not only financial considerations, but also social and community factors. This was especially relevant in Somersham, where the local community was already working with the County Council on a localism pilot. However, members emphasised that their duty to ensure sound financial management meant that disposals at less than best consideration should continue to be brought to Cabinet for approval.

It was resolved:

To authorise the LGSS Director of Finance to grant a lease to Somersham Parish Council on terms to be agreed that include a peppercorn rent.

Chairman  
6<sup>th</sup> September 2011