

CABINET: MINUTES

Date: 24th January 2006

Time: 8.30 a.m. – 9.33 a.m.

Present: Councillor J K Walters (Chairman)

Councillors: S F Johnstone, V H Lucas, L J Oliver,
D R Pegram, J A Powley, J E Reynolds, J M Tuck.
and F H Yeulett.

Also in Attendance

Councillors: J Huppert, A C Kent and E Hughes*
* for part of the meeting only

Apologies: Councillor L W McGuire

105. MINUTES 20TH DECEMBER 2005

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 20th December 2005 were approved as a correct record subject to the following amendment and were signed by the Chairman.

Minute 100 – Public Consultation on Council Priorities

Second line third paragraph after the words “and improving standards in “ insert the word “schools” and a full stop. The first sentence to now read “In terms of key stakeholder consultation the key priority areas were improving roads and reducing congestion and improving standards in schools”.

106. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Councillor S F Johnstone declared a prejudicial interest under Paragraph 10 of the Code of Conduct in relation to agenda item six “Addenbrooke’s Access Road”, as a Non-Executive Director at Addenbrooke’s Hospital, and left the meeting whilst this item was discussed.

107. REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2006/07-2008/09

a) Budget Consultation feedback from Telephone Poll, Deliberative Opinion Poll, Internet Questionnaire, Member Surgeries and Formal Consultation meetings

Cabinet received reports despatched after the main agenda summarising the views expressed in response to the recent consultation on the Council’s Budget proposals.

These had comprised:

- Six drop in surgeries held in libraries across the County.
- Meetings with representatives from the voluntary sector, staff representatives, Head Teachers and School Governors.
- Information and questionnaire on the Internet
- A representative telephone based opinion poll of over 750 residents.
- A deliberative opinion poll involving 50 residents.
- A general media coverage campaign generating individual letters and e-mails.

The Council had put forward three options for consultation:

- Increase council tax by 4% - 65p a week extra for a mid-range Band D property
- Increase council tax by 5% - 81p a week extra for a mid-range Band D property
- Increase council tax by 6% - 98p a week extra for a mid-range Band D property

The Council had emphasised that it would consider all views, not just those relating to the three options. Cabinet noted that some people had expressed a preference for an option different from the three the Council put forward.

The public consultation meetings and drop in sessions resulted in support ranging from 7 people for a Council Tax increase of 4%, 12 for an increase of 5% and 31 for an increase of 6%. 20 people opted for other option including 5 for an increase not above inflation and 15 for no increase. In respect of the telephone survey, 750 responses were received and before the implications of each option were explained in detail, most favoured a 4% rise (72%). After they were given additional information, residents preferences changed on the amount of Council tax increase that they would support as there was a greater acceptance of a higher increase leading to less service cuts. At this stage one person favoured an increase over 6%, 29 favoured 6%, 27 favoured 5% 21 preferred 4% 3 on less than 4% 5 supporting no increase and 15 people did not either know or gave different answers.

On the preferred options 34% favoured 6%, 32% favoured 5% and 34% preferred to see only a 4% rise.

49 Cambridgeshire residents took part in the deliberative poll, selected at random, but representative of the local population in terms of gender, age and occupation. Before hearing the Council's presentation and participating in group sessions, residents favoured either below or at the rate of inflation

increases in council tax with some not yet having reached an opinion. Following the 3-hour session almost all participants accepted the need for an increase above the rate of inflation. A clear majority (27 out of 49) favoured a 5% increase. The second most popular choice was 6% increase which was favoured by 10 people. A 4% increase was supported by 7 people. 3% expressed no preference between alternative budgets. Those who wanted no increase in Council Tax before the session chose a 5% or 5% increase afterwards. Two others favoured an increase of between 5.5%.

Services where the greatest numbers were prepared to see reductions in spending (if cuts had to be made) were:

- Funding of cultural services (22 accepting cuts here)
- Road improvement schemes (17)
- Maintenance of grass verges and road markings (17).

Very few wanted to see cuts in care for the elderly/disabled or care for the young/vulnerable people.

For the leaflet and internet consultation at the time of the report to Cabinet 170 printed questionnaire leaflets and 89 internet questionnaires had been completed. While this was an important part of the communication consultation process it was accepted that there was no way of gauging how representative the responses received were. The results were:

<u>Increase levels</u>	Number of responses	%
No increase or Inflation level	17	6
4%	56	22
5%	73	28
6%	106	41
Other	7	3

The comments made on the budget by the Joint Consultative Committee (Teachers), staffside, the Local Councils Liaison Committee a meeting with Voluntary organisations and the Cambridgeshire Care Partnership were also reported as set out in sections 10-12 of the report on feedback from member Surgeries and formal consultation meetings. It was highlighted that the Cambridgeshire Care Partnership had requested that the Cabinet should consider increasing Adult Social Care pooled budgets from the budget cash limit of 1.4% to 2.4% for the

reasons set out in their letter appended to the Cabinet Budget Consultation paper. The Primary Care Trusts had undertaken to match fund this amount, if approved.

From all the statistics provided from the various consultation exercises, it could be seen that there was support for the Administration's proposed 5% Council Tax rise. While account needed to taken of the consultation exercise, Cabinet was reminded that the consultation responses were a very small percentage of the overall population and that the Council needed to exercise its judgement on what was a reasonable Council Tax increase, taking into account by Central Government announcements on what it considered were reasonable tax increases and the likely capping implications of going above the figure provided, as well as taking into account the tax burden that would be placed on Cambridgeshire residents.

It was resolved:

To note and to take into account the results of the broad consultation exercise undertaken when determining the Budget for next year.

(b) Issues raised by Budget Seminars and Responses

Cabinet also received a report setting out the issues raised at the Council Budget seminars in the course of considering the implications of the proposed Budget Cash Limits for 2006/07 and the responses that had been provided by the officers

In respect of the Environment and Community Services budget seminar a correction was made to wording under the sub title "Highways and Access2 page 15 so the third line should now read:

"Officers confirmed that it would impact particularly on performance indicators but more indirectly on the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)."

It was noted that the Offices of Environment and Community Services (ECS) and Children and Young People's Services (CYPS)) had been required to make difficult resource allocation decisions as a result of the cash limits arising from the Government settlement. The recommendations in the current report were to help ameliorate the worst effects of service reductions and help safeguard the elderly and children with learning disabilities.

The portfolio holder for Children's Services reported that the £788,000 budget shortfall identified at the seminar had now been met. The budget shortfall had been the result of the unexpected discontinuation by the Government of the safeguarding grant and £350,000 from other pressures, including the complexities involved in the reallocation of area budgets. The funding shortfall had been filled partly, from the revised recommendation set out in the current budget report included later on the agenda to provide an additional £400,000 to CYPS from the Good Housekeeping Reserve, and from savings made to other CYPS budgets.

It was resolved:

To note the issues raised by the Members Seminar as part of the discussion on the 2006/07 County Council budget.

(c) Revenue and Capital Budgets 2005/06- 2008/09

Cabinet considered detailed proposals for the County Council's 2006/07 Budget, as set out in the published budget book and as updated in the report to the meeting.

Cabinet noted that the current Government grant settlement was the worst case scenario for the County Council, being the second lowest settlement for a county council in the country.

Concern was expressed by Cabinet members at not only the continued Government slippage on the main budget support announcements, but also on the lack of detailed information/clarification on the new 4 block model of grant allocation. In addition, it was noted that final notification on the details of supporting grants had still not been received.

Cabinet's view was that a 4% Council Tax rise would result in an unacceptable level of service cuts to residents of the borough while any Council Tax increase over 5% was likely to incur Central Government capping which would lead to even greater costs for local taxpayers. There was also insufficient support from the public consultation exercise to consider embarking on such a risky confrontational strategy.

In addition to the £400,000 additional budget recommended for the Children's and Young People's Service, an additional £400,000 was also recommended from the Good Housekeeping Reserve to support the Social Care pooled budgets. As a result of the proposals, an additional £800,000 was being used to support the most vulnerable members of society.

It was also noted that apart from Band D, figures differed from draft Budget Book due to further amendments and adjustments.

Councillor Pegram wished to place on record his disquiet regarding approving the capital budget without knowing the final Government allocations.

It was resolved:

That Cabinet agrees to recommend the Budget to Council as follows:

1) To approve the Office cash limits as set out in Table 1 (page 4 of the Budget Book) subject to the following proposed amendments:

- An addition of £400,000 to the Office of Children and Young People's Services (OCYPS) in 2006/07 to reflect the unexpected loss of the Safeguarding Children Grant.
- An addition of £400,000 to the Office of Environment and Community Services (OECS) in 2006/07 to finance the transformational and partnership pressures on Adult Social Care.
- A reduction in the amount taken to the Good Housekeeping Reserve by £800,000 to reflect the above.
- To ensure longer-term budget integrity the cash limits for 2007/08 would be reduced by: £200,000 OCYPS, £200,000 OCS and £400,000 OECS.
- That the Collection Fund Deficit is increased by £350,000 in 2006/07 to reflect recently advised changes from Districts.
- That the cash limit for OCS be reduced by £350,000 to reflect final adjustments to management cost and debt charge budgets.
- To note that after these amendments and following further consideration that

the unidentified savings value shown for OCYPS (Page 13 Table 1 of the OCYPS Budget Report) will now read zero

- To note that these changes will be reflected in the final version of the Budget Book presented to Council.
2. That approval be given to a County Budget Requirement in respect of general expenses applicable to the whole County area of £277,883,454
 3. That approval be given to a recommended County Precept for Council Tax from District Councils of £183,474, 934
(To be received in ten equal instalments in accordance with the “fall-back” provisions of the Local Authorities (Funds) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 1995)
 4. That approval be given to a Council Tax for each Band of property, based on the number of “Band D” equivalent properties notified to the County Council by the District Councils (206,588):

Band	Council Tax	Band	Council Tax
A	592.08	E	1,085.48
B	690.76	F	1,284.27
C	789.44	G	1,480.20
D	888.12	H	1,776.24

5. That approval is given to the Prudential Indicators as set out on page 20 of the Budget Book.
6. That approval is given to the Council's Treasury Management Strategy on page 21 of the Budget Book.
7. That the report of the Director of Finance and Performance on the levels of reserves and robustness of the estimates on pages 22-25 of the Budget Book be noted.

Capital Budget

8. That approval be given to Capital Payments in 2006/07 up to £85.2m net of slippage arising from:
 - i) commitments from schemes already approved;
 - ii) The consequences of new starts (for the three years 2006/07 to 2008/09) listed within the Service Director's reports that follow, subject to the receipt of appropriate capital resources and confirmation of individual detailed business cases.

Final Grant Settlement

9. Cabinet has authorised the Director of Finance and Performance, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to make technical revisions to the foregoing budget recommendations to the County Council, so as to take into account the final Revenue Support Grant Settlement, and information on District Council Tax Base and Collection Funds, if this information is only received after the meeting of Cabinet.

108. CAMBRIDGESHIRE'S LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT (LAA)

Cabinet received a report requesting Cabinet approval to the Local Area Agreement that was required in order to be able to send the agreed document to the Government Office by 10th February and obtain final ministerial agreement.

The Local Area Agreement set out the priorities for action, the proposed targets and investment of funding streams to improve local services. It required final agreement between Central Government, the County Council and its partners. All partners were now on board and it was reported that this would be one of the first LAAs to be agreed.

As a proposed new policy framework document it was also necessary to obtain full Council approval to the document in order for it to become part of the Council's constitution. A recommendation was therefore added at the meeting to seek full Council approval.

It was resolved:

- i) To endorse the final draft of Cambridgeshire's Local Area Agreement as the County Council was a partner and lead organisation in the development and delivery of the LAA.
- ii) To recommend that the Council approved the Local Area Agreement as a new policy framework document.

109. ADDENBROOKE'S ACCESS ROAD

The report sought approval to the submission of the planning application for the preferred route of the Addenbrooke's Access Road for a single carriageway with cycle lanes and approval for the indicative bridge design for the Addenbrooke's Access Road.

One of the issues that had not been considered fully at the time of the original route approval was the design of the road bridge that would cross the main Cambridge-London rail line. The current report set out the results of consultation on five indicative bridge options and the assessment scoring framework results.

Given that the bridge construction and phase 2 of the access road was to be funded through Section 106 contributions, it was important that cost issues were well managed to ensure other required elements of the section 106 package proceeded. In addition, environmental considerations were particularly important in this part of Cambridge, and especially the maintenance of the functions of the green corridor. As a result, three additional bridge designs had been considered which had been discussed with partners. The essence had been to provide intermediate numbers of spans between original options 2 and 3 which had received the highest framework scores, but which also addressed the environmental issues and could be provided at a lower cost than the original option 3.

It was resolved:

- i) That the planning application for the Addenbrooke's Access Road should be submitted, including a new bridge, based around Option 2c as contained in the officers report.
- ii) That a flowchart of the project timelines be provided to Cabinet members following the meeting.

110. COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

To report on the results of the 2005 inspections, Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) judgement and the forward improvement plan. Cabinet has requested that they receive regular update reports on all the improvement plans.

It was resolved:

- i) To note the Inspection / Assessment judgements on the Council's improvement plans for 2006-2008.
- ii) To request that quarterly progress reports on all the improvement plans are submitted to Cabinet.

111. DRAFT CABINET AGENDA PLAN 7th FEBRUARY 2006

The following changes were orally reported.

112. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was resolved:

That under section 100 (a) 4 of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following report on the grounds that it was likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information under paragraph 9 of schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972 by virtue of the report referring to any terms proposed or to be proposed by or in the course of negotiations for a contract for the supply of goods and services.

113. FUTURE SOURCING ARRANGEMENTS FOR PROPERTY DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION SERVICES

This report advised Cabinet on the proposed strategic plan for the future delivery of design and construction related services. The proposals would enable the Council to face the challenges of continuing to successfully deliver the capital programme whilst meeting the needs of the growth agenda and the governments Building Schools for the Future programme.

It was resolved to agree that officers should:

- i) Proceed with the procurement of new strategic design partners and to outsource the Council's design resource as part of that process; and
- ii) Proceed with the procurement of strategic framework partners for construction; and
- iii) To delegate responsibility to oversee the detail of the final contracts to the portfolio holder for Corporate Services in consultation with the Director of Property and Asset Management.
- iv) Proceed to undertake further work concerning the establishment of a Local Education Partnership (LEP).

Chairman
7th February 2006