

CABINET: MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 11th February 2004

Time: 10.00 – 10.42 adjourned

Present: Councillor K. Walters (Chairman)

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

Also in Attendance:

Councillor: J Broadway

Apologies: Councillor R Wilkinson

446. MINUTES

It was resolved:

To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 27th January 2004
as a correct record.

447. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

448. ISSUES ARISING FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

Shire Hall Club – Call in of Cabinet Decision – Report of 2nd February Policy Scrutiny and Audit Committee

The decisions on the Shire Hall Club taken by Cabinet on 6th January were the subject of a call-in by the Policy Scrutiny and Audit Committee (PSAC) at their meeting later on the same day. The decision to call-in was in order to scrutinise the Cabinet's reasons for rejecting the debt repayment plan proposed by the Shire Hall Club and to consider the prospects for any replacement staff facility to be provided by the Council.

Councillor Broadway the Vice Chairman of PSAC was invited, in the absence of the PSAC Chairman, Councillor Downes, to present the report prepared following their further meeting on 2nd February. PSAC had received comments and asked questions of representatives of the Shire Hall Management committee on why the Council should accept the repayment plan proposed by the club. In addition, the Leader of the Council and the Director of Resources answered questions on the Cabinet's decision and future plans for the provision of staff facilities. The Head of Democratic, Legal and Registration Services provided guidance on legal issues.

It was noted that Unison had submitted written comments on the staff facilities they would wish to see provided by the County Council on the Shire Hall Site

and as the comments were not available at the Cabinet meeting, the Director of Resources undertook to provide Cabinet Members with copies. Following information on the background to the club's finances and the issues surrounding the previous management of the club, the committee were of the view that the Cabinet, in reaching its decision, had received and considered all appropriate information. Given the long-running problems with the management of the club and the failure to meet reasonable expectations regarding its financial management and to make arrangements for the payment of the debt, the Cabinet's decision to authorise recovery of the debt was considered reasonable.

PSAC emphasised the importance of providing alternative facilities in order to promote staff welfare and to comply with health and safety requirements, including making available a smoke free area.

It was resolved:

- i) To note that following the call in and detailed consideration by PSAC, the Scrutiny Committee had endorsed the original Cabinet decisions made at the meeting on 6th January 2004.
- ii) To note the Scrutiny Committee's view of the importance of providing alternative facilities in order to promote staff welfare and to comply with health and safety requirements.

449. REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2004/05

As no final decision had been made at the time of the meeting by the Department for Education and Skills regarding the County Council's Schools Budget, and as negotiations were still ongoing, it was considered inappropriate at the current time for the Cabinet to make recommendations to the Budget Making Council meeting, which had been adjourned on this issue from 10th February to 17th February. It was hoped that a final decision would be made shortly and it would therefore be necessary to adjourn the current Cabinet meeting following consideration of all other reports on the agenda.

It was resolved:

To defer this report for consideration at a reconvened meeting, to be agreed at the close of this meeting, when it was hoped that a final decision would be received from the Department for Education and Skills on the Schools Budget.

450. UPDATE TO CAMBRIDGESHIRE SECTION 48 SCHEME

Cabinet received a report seeking approval to changes in the statutory scheme for funding schools in Cambridgeshire (known as the Section 48 Scheme) and requested updates to the document to reflect recent changes in Government guidance.

Since the Section 48 Scheme was last revised in April 1999, many amendments to the Education Acts had been made. The scheme now required changes to take into account Government guidance received on:

- Bank Account Protocols,
- Mandatory subscriptions for General Teaching Council membership,
- Teachers pensions and
- Section 11 Community Funding.

The required changes were highlighted in bold type in the consultation version attached to the officers' report. It was noted that both Headteachers and school governors' attention had been drawn to the sections requiring significant changes, as part of the detailed consultation exercise undertaken with the schools. No responses had been received.

It was resolved:

- i) To endorse the required changes to the Section 48 Scheme to be implemented for April 2004 as set out in the appendix to the officers' report.
- ii) To note that further work was being undertaken to revise guidance for schools to reflect the new Scheme requirements.

451. OXMOOR OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAMME SINGLE REGENERATION BUDGET (SRB): DRAFT DELIVERY PLAN 2004/05 FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT

Cabinet received a report reviewing progress with the SRB programme 2003/04 and providing details of suggested key activities for the draft SRB Delivery Plan 2004/05. The Oxmoor Opportunities Programme was awarded £1.48m from SRB Round 6 for a period of six and a half years, ending in March 2007. For the new "Investing in Communities Programme", the East of England Development Agency had requested partner agencies should establish a 10 year planning framework and under the draft framework, priority had been given for a new programme from 2007/08 covering Oxmoor and other pockets of need in Huntingdonshire, Eynesbury, St Neots, Ramsey and Yaxley.

Highlights from the SRB Programme for 2003/04 were set out in the report under the headings: New Facilities, Community Involvement and Empowerment and Community Based Services. It was proposed that the last three years of the SRB programme would focus on building the capacity of mainstream service providers to transform the way they engaged with the community and to tailor services to meet local needs through the Neighbourhood Management Action Plan. The Action Plan for Oxmoor was to be adopted by the Huntingdonshire Local Strategic Partnership, as part of the Community Strategy.

The five point agenda for improvement, drawn up following local people participation in household surveys and discussion groups, would be addressed through five transformational projects as detailed in the report.

It was noted that the monitoring of the performance on the projects would initially be the subject of reports back to the Community and Economic Development SDG

It was resolved:

To approve the key activities for the draft Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) delivery plan for the Oxmoor Opportunities Programme 2004/05 as detailed in Appendix 1 to the Officers' report.

452. HERITAGE SERVICES – THE WAY FORWARD

Cabinet received a report requesting the adoption of a renewed vision and purpose for Heritage Services as well strategic objectives for the period 2003 to 2007 to help underpin service development.

Corrections were provided to the officers' report as follows:

Paragraph 1.1

In the 3rd Line Deletion of "Department of Corporate Planning" and replacing it with the words "Libraries and Heritage Department".

Paragraph 1.4

In the first bullet point on the first line, deleting the date "1998" and inserting "1996" as the date for the creation of an Education, Libraries and Heritage Service.

The report set out the significant developments/challenges that had been responded to by the service in recent years. As well as providing a framework within which the complimentary annual service plans were to be formulated, the strategy document would be used to provide a framework for interaction with partners and as a staff reference document.

In answer to a question raised, it was indicated that the strategy would be delivered within existing resources and that in agreeing the strategy, the Cabinet was not agreeing to additional resources being provided.

It was resolved:

To adopt the Vision and Strategy for Heritage Services as set out at Annex 1 of the officers' report.

453. BUDGET MONITORING

Cabinet received a report summarising the financial results for revenue, capital and trading units to the end of December and including forecast outturn results for 2003-04.

Revenue Spending

There was a total overspend to December 2003 of £4.5m (or 3%) on Services (excluding Education Self Managing Institutions (SMIs) and Partnerships with Health), with a total forecast overspending at year-end of £5.1m. The principal area of overspend was in Social Services.

Capital Spending And Financing

Social Services and Environment and Transport were expected to spend in line with gross budget. Slippage was anticipated in the Education, Libraries and Heritage, and Policy programmes as detailed in the report. Overall, the latest forecasts of spending and financing remained in line with budget.

Capital Financing

Properties have been sold with a value of £6.2m. Sufficient receipts were expected to be available to provide the necessary finance for the capital programme. This was however dependent on certain sales completing before the end of the financial year and if these are delayed, then alternative sources of finance would need to be secured in the short term.

It was resolved:

To note the trends in spending in 2003/04.

454. MONITORING OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF JOINT REVIEW OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Following a report on the outcome of the Cambridgeshire Joint Review reported to Cabinet on 28th October and the agreement of a draft Action Plan, this was the first quarterly update report on the progress being made on those areas identified as requiring further action. Many of the actions to be taken were already part of the Social Services and County Work programmes and plans. Details were provided of the sections of the action plan requiring urgent progress to ensure improved outcomes for users and carers. Also highlighted were those areas of the action plan that had now been implemented.

The report indicated that some items would require additional resources and/or capacity if they were to be fully implemented, and therefore Cabinet asked for details of the costs involved to be presented in a future report.

It was resolved:

- i) To note the progress being made to implement the recommendations of the Joint Review and
- ii) To note that further progress reports were to be received by Cabinet on a quarterly basis.
- iii) To request that officers prepare, as soon as practicable, a further report to Cabinet setting out the costs of those

items in the action plan that would require additional resources and /or capacity if they were to be fully implemented.

455. DELEGATIONS OF BUDGETS TO NURSERY SCHOOLS IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Cabinet were informed that Nursery schools were to be the subject of the same governance legislation as other schools. Currently they received devolved budgets managed through their governing bodies. From 1st April there was a statutory requirement that Local Education Authorities introduce delegated budgets to nursery schools. The report requested approval in respect of budget issues, further to the agreed report at the 27th January meeting on the formula for funding schools in Cambridgeshire.

As indicated in the previous report, the Secretary of State for Education and Skills had emphasised the importance of avoiding turbulence in school funding in 2004/05 and it was therefore recommended that there should be no changes to the current formula distribution mechanisms until April 2005.

It was resolved

To agree the following in respect of Nursery Schools:

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- To make no changes, for at least one year, to the current formula distribution mechanisms.
- That the block hours for Special Educational Needs (SEN) would remain unchanged for April 2004 with the proviso that this was a priority issue for review for April 2005.
- That schools would be invited to enter a 'buy back' agreement in respect of their central budget shares, for the financial year 2004/5.

456. CABINET OUTLINE AGENDA 2ND MARCH 2004

It was resolved:

To note the agenda for the 2ND March meeting.

457. ADJOURNMENT OF THE MEETING

The Chairman then adjourned the meeting. He advised that it would be reconvened on 13th February 2004 at 12.30 pm when Cabinet would consider the deferred item on the Council Budget for 2004/05 and at which time it was hoped that the final decision on the Schools Budget would be received from the Department for Education and Skills.

Chairman

02.3.04