

CABINET: MINUTES

Date: 6th February 2007

Time: 10.00 a.m. – 11.25 a.m.

Present: J K Walters (Chairman)

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

Also in Attendance

Councillors: M Smith

Apologies: Councillors L W McGuire and F H Yeulett

306. MINUTES 23rd JANUARY 2007

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 23RD January 2007 were approved as a correct record subject to the inclusion of Councillor Downes on the record of other members' attendance with an updated copy being signed by the Chairman.

307. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Councillor Tuck declared a personal interest in item 5 of the agenda "Queen's Secondary School Wisbech – Outcome of consultations" as the chairman of the interim board of governors at Queen's Secondary School.

308. PETITION - OBJECTING TO THE CUTTING OF STAGECOACH BUS SERVICE 178

A petition of approximately 130 signatures was received on behalf of the village of Gamlingay objecting to the cutting of Stagecoach bus service 178 covering Gamlingay, Potton and Biggleswade and the 188 covering a wider area in neighbouring Bedfordshire. The details of the petition was presented by Councillor Ann Elsby, the South Cambridgeshire District Councillor and the Parish Councillor for Gamlingay, who in response to a question replied that she was not a candidate in any forthcoming local election. The petition requested that Cambridgeshire County Council should agree to contribute towards a subsidy to retain Bedfordshire Buses providing an hourly service using Chiltern buses to Biggleswade, which would also include provision for Gamlingay. Bedfordshire County Council had already agreed to the subsidy, subject to the County Council also agreeing to contribute to the cost of the route. The main points for put forward by the villagers in support of subsidising the identified service was that it was required by the village residents:

- to access doctors
- for their children to be able to attend after hour activities at Stratton School and travel from the village to Bedford College
- to travel to Biggleswade or Sandy to catch trains to go to work
- who were older and had no means of transport to access relatives in Potton, Biggleswade and Sandy. (16% of villagers had no access to private transport)

Cabinet members asked questions in respect of:

- Whether there was currently a service for students who transferred to Bedfordshire to enable them to access after school activities. In reply, it was indicated there was no service currently utilised to assist for such activities.
- How many of the 130 signatures used the bus services. The reply was that “quite a lot” used the bus services referred to.
- Whether the Councillor had approached County Council officers to assess progress on the ongoing current negotiations between the two county councils. At the current time she replied that she had not approached any of the County’s officers.

It was also reported that the local County Councillor for Gamlingay, Councillor Kindersley had also provided comments indicating that he was very supportive of the aims of the petition, stating that the request was for the County Council to contribute some funding to the bus services serving Gamlingay for the 2.2 miles before they cross the Bedfordshire border. Without the buses, the village was effectively marooned with no access to many vital services relating to health and other services such as banking.

It was resolved:

that as no report was included on the agenda and as there were ongoing discussions between the County Council and Bedfordshire County Council in respect of the issues raised in the petition, the officers would take the petition away and respond to the lead petitioner directly in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services.

309 QUEEN’S SECONDARY SCHOOL WISBECH- OUTCOME OF CONSULTATIONS

Cabinet received a report seeking approval for a revised timescale for the establishment of a Foundation School with Trust status in Wisbech following approval by Cabinet on 19 December 2006, which had sought an original date of September 2007.

Cabinet was advised that the regulations for obtaining trust status provided through the Education and Inspections Act 2006 were due to come into force in May for implementation from September 2007, but would only apply to those schools already identified as ‘Pathfinder’ schools, and who had already undertaken much of the necessary groundwork. The next cohort of schools

to be able to move to Trust status would be those who successfully applied to be 'early adopters' – and this was now the intended route for the new Wisbech school.

Cabinet was therefore advised that it would not be possible to establish the Trust for September 2007, but instead a new Fresh Start Foundation school would open in September. It was hoped that the Trust could be established from January 2008, now the earliest possible date. The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services was due to meet the Schools Minister the following month and would be discussing issues to ensure the revised timetable was safeguarded.

In addition, Cabinet requested that officers should take all necessary steps to ensure the Council's interests were protected in respect of the transfer of the assets to the trust. This could require a further report back to Cabinet at a future date.

It was resolved to:

- i) Approve the establishment of a 11-16 Foundation School;
- ii) Approve the establishment of a Community Trust from January 2008.
- iii) Delegate to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People Services in consultation with the Deputy Chief Executive OCYPS and the Director of Finance and Performance consideration of all the necessary action that should be taken to safeguard the Council in respect of the transfer of the assets to the trust.

310. RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS FOR A PLANNING GAIN SUPPLEMENT

Cabinet received a report explaining that in early December 2006 the Government had published for consultation, detailed proposals concerned with how planning obligations (section 106 agreements) would operate if a Planning Gain Supplement was introduced. The closing date for the consultation was 28th February 2007.

Cabinet noted that the County Council had responded to the earlier consultation setting out a number of concerns with the original proposals. These centred around:

- The need to maintain the level of infrastructure funding in Cambridgeshire
- The lack of detail in the proposals,
- Doubts as to whether infrastructure funding could be synchronised with development,
- Continuation of the ability to obtain free land from developers,

- The mechanism for collection and recycling of the levy.

Whilst the current consultation concentrated on detailed matters to be addressed in the event that the PGS proposals are implemented, there remained significant issues in terms of the proposed replacement of the current arrangements for negotiating planning obligations. The County Council had previously strongly opposed the introduction of a PGS on the basis that it would be more likely to adversely affect Cambridgeshire at a time of extensive growth pressures.

There was also concern that the 2006 Pre-Budget report had proposed that only 70% of PGS revenues would be earmarked for local infrastructure priorities and that the remaining PGS funds would be returned to the regions rather than the specific local authority area where they were raised in order to finance strategic infrastructure projects. This detail had not been included in the consultation documents and if agreed would adversely affect the County Council, who currently had an excellent negotiating record in obtaining Section 106 funding from developers to meet local infrastructure needs. It was also considered vital that whatever process was in place, it did not add to the uncertainty regarding provision of infrastructure or reduce the funding available locally. One member expressed scepticism regarding the ability to source alternative funding to meet required infrastructure needs. This was referred to as a risk in the risk management section of the report.

Cabinet supported the view that all capacity expansion needed to deal with the impact of new developments should be met from planning obligations to ensure contributions were received at times agreed with land owners, with finance available to enable the necessary infrastructure and services to be provided at the right time. The decision of whether it was best to provide such infrastructure on or off the site should be a matter for local determination and that a clear link should remain between the local planning process and the planning and provision of key local services. The Chairman reminded Cabinet that there was already an existing £2 billion deficit gap for funding infrastructure, and that the County Council had been forced to accept higher growth rates than there was existing capacity to accommodate.

The Cabinet supported the suggested specific responses to the questions in the consultation and the covering statement prepared which highlighted that the County Council remained opposed in principle to the introduction of PGS. This had also received the approval from the two relevant Service Development Groups.

It was resolved:

- i) To note the report and endorse the suggested response to the consultation.
- ii) To delegate to the lead member for Transport and Delivery and the Deputy Chief Executive, Environment &

Community Services the authority to agree the final response based on views of the Cabinet.

311. HISTORIC CENTRE PEDESTRIAN ZONE CYCLING RESTRICTION, CAMBRIDGE

Cabinet received a report setting out the consultation results received on the experiment to allow cyclists into the historic centre pedestrian zone between 10 am and 4pm Monday to Saturday; and the subsequent review of the Cambridge Environment & Traffic Management Area Joint Committee (AJC). The AJC at a meeting on 22nd January had agreed to recommend approving making the experimental traffic permanent to allow cycling at all times in the historic centre pedestrian zone.

Cabinet was reminded that cycling in Great St Mary's Street, Market Street, Market Hill and Sidney Street between 10am and 4pm (Monday to Saturday) had been prohibited since 1992 when the historic centre pedestrian zone restriction was implemented. The Area Joint Committee (AJC) in 2004 supported facilitating two-way cycle routes through the central area by allowing two-way cycling in Trinity Street on an experimental basis. However, in light of safety concerns, Cabinet had not approved the experiment but had asked the AJC to consider alternative options, with any outcome being reported back to Cabinet. At an AJC meeting in January 2005, officers had reported to that no practicable measures were available to accommodate two-way cycling in Trinity Street and as a result, had approved an experimental suspension of the cycle restriction, with a public consultation exercise being carried out after a 12-month trial period.

At its meeting on 22nd January 2007, the AJC had considered the results of research into the experiment and the feedback received from stakeholders and the public. As a result they were recommending to Cabinet approval to making the experimental traffic permanent, to allow cycling at all times in the historic centre pedestrian zone but had also highlighted the need for further work to improve signage in the pedestrian area zone and to continue to encourage responsible cycling.

There was a lengthy debate on the measures that could be taken, as well as some concerns raised regarding the evidence that had been provided, bearing in mind the market research company employed to conduct research to assess public opinion of the experiment, had gone into receivership early on, requiring officers to take over the research programme at short notice. There was concern that the subsequent research results were insufficient to justify the recommendation being made. In answer to concerns regarding whether the firm's financial status should have been picked up on earlier, it was explained that the contract for this particular research was part of a wider agreed contract, with district councils as well as the County Council.

Reference was made to Cambridgeshire Cycling Campaign who had e-mailed a letter to Members of the Cabinet in advance of the meeting, supporting the

AJC recommendation, which it believed was in line with National Guidance, and which also had the support of the Cambridge MP. The Campaign strongly supported the promotion of legal and responsible cycling, improved clearer signage, enhanced promotion/education regarding the rules, particularly for newly arrived students and short term visitors, together with increased enforcement. They highlighted that any continuation of the ban would have no effect on irresponsible cyclists. Copies of the letter were available for the public at the meeting.

Several options on providing an alternative resolution to agreeing making the experimental traffic order permanent were discussed including:

- Extending the experimental traffic order for a further 12 months while assessing the success of a) the further education measures suggested for students and short term visitors but also extending it more widely, b) approaching the constabulary to take high profile enforcement action and c) improved signage measures. Officers responded that legally an experimental order could only be in place for 18 months and that this time was nearly over. In response, the Chairman asked that in future such contentious issues should be the subject of earlier reports to ensure that Cabinet had more time to consider other options.
- Extending the experimental traffic order for a further six month and taking into account the same issues as above for a further report back. In reply, officers indicated the mechanism for setting up traffic orders required Secretary of State approval and would take some time and it was therefore unlikely that it would run for a full six month period which would not be enough time to assess fully the further measures being proposed.
- Letting the order lapse by not agreeing to the permanent order – this was not recommended by officers as this would lead to great uncertainty on what the position was and would not improve the risks to pedestrians and make it very difficult to enforce, as well endangering the good will of the cycling fraternity.
- Deferring a decision at the current meeting and receiving a report back to the 27th February with more detailed information on concerns raised before making a final decision, or if necessary, receiving a report back to a special meeting in March.
- Making the order permanent, but reviewing the progress of further measures (set out in bullet point 1 above) after 12 months with the proviso that if Cabinet were not satisfied, they would revoke the permanent order.

After lengthy debate a vote was taken on a motion proposed in respect of a new recommendation 5, based on the last bullet point above and this was agreed 5-2 in favour. As strong concerns were still being expressed regarding the ability to enforce measures to prevent illegal cycling (a number of Cabinet members had personal experience as pedestrians of being hit by cyclists), officers undertook to request that the Constabulary be asked to undertake high profile enforcement action in respect of lawbreakers and that this should include publicising prosecutions.

It was resolved:

- i) To approve making the experimental traffic order permanent to allow cycling at all times in the historic centre pedestrian zone;
- ii) To note that officers would continue to monitor the accident situation and pedestrian and cycle activity in the historic central area, to determine the need to consider possible weekend cycling restrictions;
- iii) To request that the AJC review signage in the pedestrian zone to identify ways of improving clarity of the restrictions (particularly the one-way streets), without undermining environmental considerations;
- iv) To note that work would continue with the University and language schools to encourage responsible cycling and that this would be reviewed for effectiveness; and
- v) To agree that Cabinet undertake a formal review of the permanent order after 12 months to assess progress on enforcement and safety concerns with the intention of revoking the permanent order if sufficient progress had not been demonstrated.

312. ALLOCATION OF GRANT AID TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

Cabinet received a report advising on the proposed allocation of small grants to voluntary organisations in 2007/08. Cabinet was reminded that following the 2003 County Council review of the grants made to voluntary organisations, a new policy framework had been agreed whereby all grants that were not classified as small grants (i.e. those over £3000 per annum) should in future be transferred to contractual commissioning processes in service departments. This process had now been completed and therefore the current report was to recommend approval to small community grant requests submitted on an annual basis, which were not subject to contract.

A further recommendation had resulted from discussion at the special Grants Joint SDG after concerns had been raised that currently there were three stages involved in scrutinising grants that only had a total value of over £100K. They had therefore requested that officers should look to reviewing the grants process, to streamline both the decision making process and to consider the appropriate level regarding members involvement. In addition, Cabinet wished to ensure that a common corporate approach was adopted in future, following criticism by voluntary organisations received as part of the feedback on the budget consultation of the inconsistencies in the grants administration process between the two main budget holding Offices.

The grants recommended for approved were as follows with details provided in the appendices of the report submitted to Cabinet.

Cambridgeshire Community Foundation CF for small voluntary and community groups 2007/08 (Vulnerable Adults).

- 42 applications received
- * *1 application was made to both Young Lives and CCF.*
- 8 new applicants (19%)
- Total amount requested £83,593
- Budget for 2007/08 £78,000
- Total amount recommended to award **£72,864**
- Number of recommended successful applicants 38 (90%)

YOUNG LIVES - Grant Aid for small voluntary and community groups serving Children and Young People 2007/08

- Applications received from 31 organisations
- New / First time applicants 29
- Total amount requested £78,941
- Budget for 07/08 £32,000
- Total amount recommended to award (subject to confirmation of eligibility in respect of one organisation) **£31,433**
- Number of recommended successful applicants 12 (one of these was still under review)
- 19 applications were originally recommended to be declined, but of these:
 - 13 might be otherwise supported - 11 were eligible for potential funding from Early Years and Child Care; 1 application was be included in a service level agreement; and 1 had been encouraged to apply through the Youth Opportunities Fund.
 - 6 were considered to be ineligible (e.g. they sought funding for work outside Cambridgeshire, had reserves, income over £50k, and /or were not a VCS organisation). As referred to above, one further application at the time of the Cabinet meeting was still being investigated and might prove ineligible for the same reasons.

It was resolved:

- i) to confirm the recommendations for the allocation of Small Grants to Voluntary Sector Children and Vulnerable Adults Services in 2007/08, as outlined in Appendix 2 and 3 to the report subject to County Council approval of the 07/08 Budget at their meeting on 20th February and any outstanding issues still being pursued by officers in respect of individual applications.

- ii) To request that the officers undertake a review of existing grants and commissioning processes including the remit and extent of member involvement.

313. DRAFT CABINET AGENDA PLAN 27TH FEBRUARY 2007

One member expressed concern in respect of a report due to come back titled Haggis Gap, Fulbourn (sale to Nene at less than best consideration) as Cabinet had at their last meeting agreed a report suggesting that if the asset were declared surplus to County Council requirements, then it would be offered to the local District and Parish Councils at open market value in accordance with the County's disposal policy and that if neither local Council chose to acquire the property, it would be offered on the open market.

It was resolved:

To note the agenda plan with the addition of a non key decision report entitled "Request to proceed with the development of the proposed Integrated Highways Management Centre"

Chairman
27th February 2007