

CABINET: MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 3 September 2002

Time: 10.00 – 11.15

Place: Shire Hall, Cambridge

Present: Councillor J K Walters (Chairman)

Councillors S F Johnstone, V Lucas, A K Melton,
S B Normington, L Oliver, D R Pegram, J A Powley
J E Reynolds and R Wilkinson

Also in attendance:

Councillors C M Ballard, S V Brinton, J A P Eddy,
A C Kent and R B Martlew

192. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 23 July 2002 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

193. REFERRALS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

There were no referrals from Scrutiny Committees to report.

194. MARCH AND CHATTERIS MANAGED WORKSPACE / OFFICES

The Cabinet considered a report which sought approval of funding arrangements for managed workspace / office schemes in March and Chatteris.

Since 2000, the Council had agreed to the provision of capital and loan funding for three workshop developments in Wisbech, Littleport and March, in order to support the economic development and diversity of the Fens economy. It was proposed that a new scheme be established in Chatteris in order to supplement the range and type of premises currently available in the town and further encourage the spread of high tech firms from Cambridge.

The total cost of the scheme was £2.5m. Funding was being sought from Fenland District Council, EEDA and the EU, and the Cabinet was asked to contribute £100k towards the cost. It was proposed that the Council's contribution be met by the re-allocation of £88k capital funding previously put aside for the March scheme (which would be supported by a short term loan), with the remainder being provided from Economic and Community Development funds.

Cabinet noted that:

- it was intended that the County Council's investment would be in the form of equity and a share of the rental income available after the payment of a rental agreement to EEDA and management costs. There was a slight risk that the Council could lose its equity share in the property if a reasonable occupancy level of the site was not obtained.
- at this stage of the project, detailed costs were not known. Therefore, the Council's contribution to the scheme contained some contingency funding to ensure that costs could be met.
- sites for the proposed scheme had been identified and, subject to the Cabinet's approval of the funding proposals, work would progress to purchase land and obtain planning consent from the local planning authority as soon as possible.

Reference was made to the effective partnership working with partner agencies in bringing the scheme forward.

The Cabinet decided:

- (i) to agree that a short term loan of £88,000 to support the March scheme will be financed in addition to the Economic & Community Development capital budget
- (ii) to commit £100,000 to the Chatteris scheme using the £88,000 remaining in the capital budget and £12,000 from Economic & Community Development funds.
- (iii) to approve that the County Council enters into an agreement with Fenland District Council for the Chatteris scheme under which:
 - income above the rental guarantee to EEDA and management costs, is shared in proportion to the capital contributions - Fenland District Council 80% and County Council 20%; and
 - losses incurred after payment of the rental guarantee to EEDA and management costs, are shared with Fenland District Council on an equal basis up to a maximum cost to the County Council of £100,000 - the payments to be made through transfers in equity in the scheme to Fenland District Council.

195. E2B – FORMATION OF COMPANY TO SUPPORT NATIONAL GRID FOR LEARNING ACTIVITY ACROSS EASTERN COUNTIES

It was reported that E2B (the East of England Broadband Consortium) was seeking to change the legal status of the Consortium by establishing a separate legal entity; a Charitable Trust Company limited by guarantee. This would enable the Consortium to fully fulfil its functions and seek opportunities to generate income to further its proposals.

It was noted that the Cabinet was being asked to approve the participation of the Council in the creation of the Charitable Trust Company at this stage, and not the actual membership of the Trust Board. The County Council, along with other participating local authorities, would be expected to become members in the future and to form the electoral college through which trustees / directors of the company would be appointed.

Cabinet decided:

- (i) to support the change in legal status of E2B to a Charitable Trust Company limited by guarantee.
- (ii) to approve the membership of Cambridgeshire County Council of the electoral college of the proposed Charitable Trust Company, through which trustees/directors of the company would be appointed.

subject to the Director of Resources being satisfied as to the financial and legal arrangements of the Company.

196. OUTLINE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS ARISING FROM THE STRATEGY REVIEW OF THE LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION SERVICE

The Cabinet considered a report which set out the vision for the future of the Libraries and Information Service.

Members were reminded that since February 2002, two reviews of the service had been carried out, one by library management consultants Kentwood Associates and one by Business Link, who had been engaged by the Chief Executive to focus on the business aspects of the service. Additionally, Audit Commission inspectors had reviewed the service to provide information for the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA).

All three reviews had identified similar issues, including: the difficulty of the service's funding position; declining usage, particularly of smaller libraries; and the challenge of meeting the Public Library Standards. It was therefore essential to review priorities for the service in line with the resources available. Attention was drawn to the comments raised within the draft CPA report, which challenged the Council to develop a vision for the Libraries and Information Service that rationalised the current service pattern and made more targeted use of the resources available.

The Lead Member for Lifelong Learning reported that the Lifelong Learning SDG had been consulted during the development of the proposed strategy for future service delivery, the key issues arising from the proposals and the methodology for assessing the effectiveness of library provisions. The views of the SDG were outlined in the report submitted to this meeting.

It was noted that Cabinet would receive a further report at its meeting on 24 September 2002, which would include a more developed version of the vision. This would take the form of the medium term strategy section of the Annual

Library Plan for 2003 / 04. The Plan would need to be approved by Cabinet before submission to the Department for Culture, Medium and Sport by 30 September 2002.

Cabinet decided:

- (i) to agree the outline vision for the future of the Libraries and Information Service (as set out in section 2 of the report); and
- (ii) to endorse the use of the assessment methodology – and the associated criteria (as set out at Appendix 1 to the report) – in order to assist in establishing the future pattern of library provision and to establish the priority for a programme of public information activities linked to the phased introduction of static library rationalisation.

197. FAIRER CHARGING – FEES AND CHARGES

The Cabinet considered a report, which detailed the responses received to the consultation undertaken on amending fees / charges and sought approval to implement arrangements for the first phase of the Fairer Charging implementation.

At its last meeting on 23 July 2002, the Cabinet had agreed to undertake consultations with stakeholder organisations on possible options for increasing existing charges to cover part of the anticipated loss of income from the implementation of the Government's Fairer Charging guidelines. Six formal responses had been received to the consultation process, five of which were opposed to the suggested increases and one supportive.

Members were reminded that none of the options would recoup the full cost of implementing the Fairer Charging guidelines. However, all of the options would retain in place the right of appeal to the Director of Social Services in situations where the charge was considered likely to cause hardship.

The Cabinet considered the consultation responses and the options available. Reference was made to the fact that the Council was not receiving any additional Government funding to implement Fairer Charging guidelines and that this was one of a number of recent changes that were having an adverse financial impact on Social Services. The view was expressed that the proposed charge increases represented the only viable option for addressing some of the revenue shortfall created by the introduction of the new guidelines.

It was noted that the Council would be asked to approve the proposed changes to charges at its meeting on 1 October 2002 and to backdate any changes to 1 October 2002.

The Cabinet **RECOMMEND** that full Council:

- (i) note the response to the consultation

- (ii) approve the implementation of the first phase of Fairer Charging; and
- (iii) approve the preferred options for increasing charges, as follows:
 - £13 per hour charge for home care for 'full payers'
 - £2 administration fee for blue badge applications, rising to the upper permissible limit once new government guidance is issued
 - £2 per visit charge for attendance at/travel to day facilities
 - £2.85 per meal charge for CHOICES meals

198. CAPITAL PROGRAMME – HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRE IMPROVEMENTS

The Cabinet discussed the capital programme for Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) improvements and considered proposed changes to the programme to allow a scheme to go ahead at Bluntisham HWRC.

Members were advised that, when capital schemes were evaluated during the MTSP preparation in 2001, the adjacent land needed for a site extension at Bluntisham HWRC was not available to enable improvements to be made to resolve issues regarding highway access. This position had changed unexpectedly and the terms of sale of the land had been agreed, subject to planning approval. The position regarding facilities at Cambridge, St Neots, Whittlesey and Grunty Fen was noted.

The Cabinet decided:

to vary existing budget totals to allow improvements to be made to the Bluntisham HWRC site in 2002 / 03.

199. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2002 / 03

The Cabinet considered a report summarising the financial results for revenue, capital and trading units to the end of July 2002, including forecast outturn results for the current year.

Members noted that:

- forecast variations for the year (at outturn) totalled £3.6m overspending, principally on Social Services and on Debt Charges. This took into account the action plan proposed to address the overspending in Social Services in 2002 / 03, excluding the deferral of repayment of the 2001 / 02 overspend and the recommendations relating to Fairer Charging (since both are subject to Cabinet decisions on other items).
- it was proposed that Cabinet make no decisions at this stage in the financial year in respect of Debt Charges. It was suggested that the situation continue to be closely monitored and reported to Cabinet, and that a decision of financing this overspending be made when the 2002 / 03 Outturn was reported in the Summer of 2003.

- proposed action to address the overspending in Social Services had been outlined in a separate report to Cabinet (Minute No. 200 refers).

The second quarter results to the end of September 2002 would be presented to Cabinet on 29 October 2002.

The Cabinet decided:

to note the trends in spending to date in 2002/03.

200. SOCIAL SERVICES REVENUE BUDGET POSITION

The Cabinet considered a report which outlined a proposed action plan for the recovery of the projected Social Services overspending for 2002 / 03.

Members noted that:

- the most recent budget control report had shown that total projected over commitment for the current financial year would be approximately £4m. This was due largely to previously identified pressures on the budgets for looked after children and older people.
- based on projected figures, it was anticipated that the proposed action would not be sufficient to address the total projected overspend for 2002 / 03. An overspending of around £1m was still predicted. It was proposed that overspending for the current financial year, together with the overspending incurred in 2001/ 02 (£0.5m), be carried forward to 2003 / 04 to be dealt with by a combination of MTSP and efficiency savings.
- additional funding which had been identified during the 2001 / 02 MTSP process for inclusion in the budget for 2002 / 03 had already been allocated to fund continuing budget pressures.
- despite severe budgetary pressures, it was likely that Social Services would still meet critical performance targets for 2002 / 03.

The Cabinet decided:

to approve the action plan, along with the following decisions:

- (i) to agree virement of £400k from the budget for the Learning Disability Partnership into the budget for older people.
- (ii) to agree to give the WRVS provider of the Choices meals service a six month period of notice that the Council intends to review the service and re-tender the contract.
- (iii) to agree deferment of the repayment of the £0.5m overspend carried forward from 2001/02 until 2003/04.

201. MEDIUM TERM SERVICE PRIORITIES

The Cabinet considered a report which gave an up-date on the resource projections for 2003 / 04 and provided an outline of the possible approach for development into the Council's public consultation document – 'Prospects'.

Members noted the key assumptions underlying the resource projections for the Council, including the outcome of the recent Government consultation on options for the formula review of revenue grant distribution. It was clear that a wide range of outcomes could apply over the MTSP period and that, because of the uncertainty regarding the level of grant allocation at this stage, the Council would need to manage the public consultation process carefully. The projected figures were based upon exemplifications of an annual benefit from the grant review of £5m per annum, which was below the middle point of possibilities. Reference was made to the impact of the budget strategy on pressures that would be unfunded in 2003 / 04.

Members commented on the significant level of unfunded pressures and the need to advise the public that, even in a 'best case' scenario where the Council received the maximum possible amount through the grant review, it would still not be enough to fund all pressure areas over the three year period.

It was noted that the Cabinet would be asked to approve 'Prospects' at its next meeting (24 September 2002).

The Cabinet decided:

to agree the report as the basis for initial public consultation.

202. COMMISSIONING STRATEGY – CARE PLACEMENTS

The Cabinet considered the proposed strategy for the development of nursing, residential and extra sheltered care over the three year period 2002 – 2005.

Members noted that the pressure to achieve short term targets for delayed transfers of care, and the longer 'lead in time' for the development of schemes to prevent hospital admission had meant that the placement rate had been increased towards the end of 2001 / 02. This had resulted in some over-commitment of Care Placements budgets and, given the need to promote independence, the projected increase in population of people over 75, and the overall shortage of places, this approach was not sustainable. The strategy identified where shortages existed and aimed to ensure that provision would be allocated equitably across the County.

The Lead Member for Vulnerable Adults reported that the Vulnerable Adults SDG had considered and indicated support for the proposed strategy.

The Cabinet decided:

- (i) to note the shortfall of Care Placements across the county.

- (ii) to confirm the strategy of development to meet the shortfall in each locality.
- (iii) to recognised the growing importance of extra sheltered housing in this strategy.

203. SOCIAL SERVICES INSPECTORATE (SSI) / AUDIT COMMISSION JOINT POSITION STATEMENT

The Cabinet considered the Executive Summary of the joint position statement for Social Services, which had been submitted to the SSI / Audit Commission prior to the joint review team's visit in November 2002. The aim of this part of the statement was to provide an overview the key issues / areas of work for the Directorate.

The Cabinet decided:

to note the Executive Summary of the Joint Review Position Statement for Cambridgeshire Social Services.

204. DELEGATIONS TO INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBERS

The Cabinet noted:

details of those matters on which delegations to individual Cabinet Members had been made and had been discharged.

205. CABINET OUTLINE AGENDA – 24 SEPTEMBER 2002

The Cabinet agreed:

to note the outline agenda for the meeting scheduled to take place on 24 September 2002 and the following proposed amendments, which had been deferred from this meeting:

- Structure Plan – approval of issues to be discussed at Examination in Public
- Annual Library Plan / Public Library Standards
- Statement of Accounts 2001 / 02

Chairman