

CABINET: MINUTES

Date: Tuesday 29th January 2002

Time: 10.00 – 10.52

Place: Shire Hall, Cambridge

Present: Councillor J K Walters (Chairman)

Councillors 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 M Ballard, R Driver, A Kent and M L Leeke,

Apologies: Councillor S F Johnstone

96. MINUTES – 8TH JANUARY 2002

The Cabinet agreed:

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 8th January 2002 as a correct record and that they be duly signed by the Chairman.

97. BUDGET MONITORING

The Cabinet noted trends in revenue and capital spending and the financial results for trading units for the third quarter of 2001/02 and forecast outturn results.

Revenue spending to the end of December showed an overall overspending of £246,000 (0.2%) against an expected spending of £145m. Cabinet's attention was drawn to emerging pressures and significant overspending in Education, Libraries and Heritage and Social Services and the management action being taken to address the situation. Forecast variations for the year-end indicated an estimated underspend of £383,000.

Overall forecasts of capital spending and financing needs for the year were slightly lower than reported in October. On capital spending payments, £28.7m had been made at the end of December against a revised forecast of £44.6m. Capital receipts of £7.0m had been received from the sale of 35 properties with a further £1.4m due from approved sales. Sufficient receipts were expected to provide the necessary finance for the Capital Programme.

98. COUNTY COUNCIL BUDGET 2002/03

(a) Budget Consultations

The Cabinet considered a report that summarised the views expressed by the public and organisations consulted during the recent budget consultation exercise which had included opinion surveys and leaflet questionnaires, independent market research and consultation meetings and surgeries.

It was noted that of the responses received there was a marginal majority in support of a proposed increase of 9.3% because of the desire to protect public services. It was noticeable that the elderly and others on fixed incomes had expressed serious concerns about the proposed increase, pointing out the divergence in recent years between the increases in their income and the level of Council Tax. Many of those involved had encouraged the County Council to increase its lobbying efforts and have expressed concern at the inequitable settlement received by Cambridgeshire from Central Government. It was therefore considered important for the Council to raise awareness of the action it was taking in relation to this matter.

The Cabinet agreed:

To note the results of the broad consultation exercise and take them into account in determining the Budget for the coming year.

(b) Consideration by Fire Authority and Service Development Groups

The Cabinet also considered a report detailing issues raised by the Cambridgeshire Fire Authority and the Council's Service Development Groups (SDGs) in the course of their consideration of the implications of the Budget cash limits for 2002/03.

The Cambridgeshire Fire Authority on 13th December 2001 had approved revenue estimates of £19.117m, which represented an increase of 5%. This compared with a 3.7% increase in the Fire SSAs of the constituent authorities. The contribution from the County Council would be £15.238m, which had been included in the overall budget proposals. In noting this, the Chairman acknowledged the pressures faced by the Fire Service and appreciated the fact that they had taken account of the comments made by the constituent authorities and responded accordingly. He welcomed the good relationship that existed locally which was not the case in other parts of the Country.

The Cabinet noted those matters raised by each of the SDGs when considering the implications of the Budget proposals for their particular service area. In relation to the School and Pupil Attainment SDG's comment on the transfer of £1.0m of the capital amount allocated to Education, Libraries and Heritage into a central fund, it was noted that this was not the case and that full allocation had been allocated to the service.

The Cabinet agreed:

To note the issues raised and take them into account in determining the Budget for the coming year.

(c) Social Services Fees and Charges and Pricing Policy

The Cabinet has considered the proposed levels of fees and charges, payment rates and pricing policies in respect of a range of Social Services to be applied in 2002/03.

Income was a major element of the Social Services revenue budget with the total income from fees and charges in 2002/03 estimated to be in the region of £18.9m. It was proposed to increase the majority of charges in line with the Council's assumption on inflation, 3% in 2002/03, with the exception of the following areas:

- An increase to £10 per hour for homecare services where the client has more than £18,500 k capital.
- A reduction in the maximum chargeable per week for home care to people in receipt of higher levels of Attendance Allowance or Disability Living Allowance.
- An increase in the charge for community meals to £2.75 to fully recover the cost of the service.
- An average increase of 8% for Older Peoples placements.

It was noted that the Director of Social Services continued to have delegated powers to waive or reduce charges in exceptional circumstances and this would continue to be used to address cases of undue hardship.

The Cabinet agreed:

To endorse the proposed Fees and Charges, Payment Rates and Pricing Policy to be included as part of the budget proposals to be recommended to full Council.

(d) Budget Proposals

The Cabinet considered proposed Budget recommendations for 2002/03 as set out in the report of the Director of Resources.

In considering the proposals Cabinet's attention was drawn to correspondence received in relation to proposed improvements to the A505 Duxford – Whittlesford junction, copies of which had been available prior to the meeting.

The County Council's Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) represented its share of the Total Standard Spending, which was the national total budget for local government set by Central Government each year. Cambridgeshire's SSA for 2002/03 was £371.3m which represented a £21.3m (6.1%) increase on last year. This compared to a national increase in SSAs of 5.4% and an

average increase of 6.2% for Shire Counties. It was noted that Cambridgeshire remained the fastest growing yet lowest funded Shire County in terms of SSA per head of population - £647, which was £74 below the Shire County average. It was estimated that if Cambridgeshire received the average funding per head of population it would have around £30m more to spend on services such as schools, caring for the elderly and roads.

The Budget proposals were broadly in line with the previously agreed Medium Term Service Priorities (MTSP) and cash limits. The medium term aim was to address the unfair funding differential faced by Cambridgeshire by increases in Council Tax. This approach was being pursued in the light of the fact that in 2001/02 the County Council's tax level was the eighth lowest of any English County. This was set against a situation where the Council had to face significant changes and developments over the next few years with many competing demands for limited resources. The recommendations were based on a 9.3% increase in Council Tax. Even if this option were pursued there would be insufficient resources to fund all demographic, legislative and other pressures faced by the Council. These amounted to £8.6m and were set out in Table 5 of the County Council Budget Summary Document.

The Cabinet agreed to **RECOMMEND**:

- (i) That approval be given to a County Budget Requirement in respect of general expenses applicable to the whole County area of £393.6m.
- (ii) That approval be given to a recommended County Precept for Council Tax from District Councils of £142.6m, to be received in equal instalments payable from 19th April 2002 in accordance with the 'fall-back' provisions of the Local Authorities (Funds) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 1995
- (iii) 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 (195,256):

Band	Council Tax
A	£487.02
B	£568.19
C	£649.36
D	£730.53
E	£892.87
F	£1,055.21
G	£1,217.55
H	£1,461.06

- (iv) That approval be given to the Council's borrowing limits.

- (v) That approval be given to Capital Payments in 2002/03 arising from earlier commitments and the consequences of the New Starts listed within the Service Director's reports, subject to the receipt of appropriate Grants and Supplementary Credit Approvals, or when the Director of Resources was satisfied that sufficient funds have been secured.
- (vi) To authorise the Director of Resources, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to make revisions to the foregoing budget recommendations so as to take into account the final Revenue Support Grant Settlement and other relevant information received after the Cabinet meeting.

99. BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN

The Cabinet considered the report of the Chief Executive on the proposed Best Value Performance Plan 2002/03.

Under the Local Government Act 1999, the Council was required to produce a Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) and to circulate a summary to all households in the County by March of each year. In December last year a revised timetable was proposed as part of the Local Government White Paper "Strong Leadership, Quality Public Services". This still required a summary version of the Plan to be produced by March but changed the deadline for production of the full version of the Plan to 31st June. This would enable Councils to include outturn performance data for the previous financial year.

The Best Value Performance Plan was an integral part of the Council's Policy Framework and was complimentary to the Council's Budget Book. It aimed to show how well the Council was doing in delivering its services and what improvements it intended to introduce. It included reference to the proposed Best Value Review programme, along with information on the outcomes of earlier Reviews.

The Plan also included an overview of the Council's past performance in respect of Best Value and other key indicators and detailed future targets. This included a comparison of Cambridgeshire's performance with other authorities. It also included thirty key overview indicators, which would form the basis of the analysis of the Council's performance to be included in the "Prospects" document to be circulated to all households. These included the Public Service Agreement initiatives in relation to which the Council would need to meet the "stretch targets" it had negotiated with Government if it was to receive additional funding and increased autonomy.

The Cabinet agreed:

To note the progress being made on the production of the Best Value Performance Plan for 2002 – 03 and the approval process relating to it, and to endorse the draft plan as a basis to proceed to Council.

100. EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2002 - 07

The Cabinet considered the draft Education Development Plan (EDP) for the period 2002 to 2007 that had been prepared for submission to the Secretary of State by 31st January 2002.

The EDP aimed to promote and support school improvement in the County and had been prepared in accordance with DfES Guidance and reflected the priorities of the County Council in relation to the development of Education services. It contained information on overall county performance and the variations in performance between similar schools and between different groups of pupils. It had been developed in consultation with the School and Pupil Attainment Service Development Group and also reflected comments on performance data made by the Education, Libraries and Heritage Scrutiny Committee. It had also been the subject of consultation with Headteachers and other interested parties.

It was noted that the EDP incorporated some very ambitious targets, especially for the attainment of 11 year olds and 16 year olds in 2004. It had been necessary to accept these targets in order that the DfES approve the Council's EDP. If such approval were not forthcoming the Council's access to significant funds would be cut off.

The Cabinet agreed:

To approve the draft Education Development Plan for submission to the DfES on 31st January 2002, and to refer the draft plan, together with any amendments deemed necessary by the Secretary of State to the meeting of full Council in March 2002.

101. BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT PLAN 2002 – 04

The Cabinet considered the proposed Behaviour Support Plan for the period 2002 – 04. The first Plan had been produced in 1998 in line with the requirements of the Education Act 1997. The legislation required Local Education Authorities to review their original Plans.

The revised Plan had taken account of the outcome of an extensive review of behaviour, attendance and exclusions carried out by District Audit. It identified priority targets for development, clear timescales for improvements, detailed resource implications and a range of performance indicators through which progress over time would be assessed and reviewed.

The Plan was constructed around the following six key objectives, which would be the focus for development over the next three years:

- Improving the strategic direction of LEA support.
- Making more effective use of data.
- Reducing the number of exclusions by supporting schools with Behaviour Management.
- Improving levels of attainment.

- Supporting vulnerable groups by working closely with schools and other agencies.
- Improving the quality of educational experience for children educated out of school.

Each objective had a number of development strands with there being around 100 areas designated for improvement.

The Cabinet agreed:

To approve the Key Objectives of the Behaviour Support Plan 2002–04 and the programme of action required to deliver them

102. QUALITY PROTECTS MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

The Cabinet considered the updated Quality Protects Management Action Plan for 2002/03.

The Quality Protects initiative, which was launched in the Autumn of 1998, was based on eleven objectives for Social Services and its partners in relation to children in need and children looked after. Councils with Social Services responsibilities had been required to produce an annual Quality Protects Management Action Plan, which set out under each objective progress made in achieving that objective, plans to improve performance and how the special Quality Protects Grant was being used.

Cabinet's attention was drawn to progress with the Quality Protects objectives set in 2001/02. The performance indicators showed that good standards were being maintained and that some of the weaker areas were being improved. There had been considerable improvements in the provision of health services for looked after children and good progress had been maintained on stability of children's placements, the implementation of the assessment framework, adoption and development of Family Support Services. However further improvements were being inhibited as a result of staffing, the recruitment of carers, both foster carers and adopters and services for disabled children and their families.

The Quality Protects Grant for 2002/03 was £931,000 with an additional capital grant of £52,000 for information technology for looked after children. The highest priorities for the use of additional resources were improving fostering allowances, meeting pressures in the budget for agency placements and developing a post adoption support service.

The Cabinet agreed:

To approve the Quality Protects Management Action Plan and commit the County Council to ensuring its effective implementation.

103. HOME CARE COMMISSIONING STRATEGY

The Cabinet considered a number of proposed changes to the commissioning Strategy for Home Care Services.

The Best Value Review of Home Care undertaken in 1998/99 resulted in a revised contracting arrangement with the independent sector, involving a smaller number of organisations. The role of the in house service was confirmed as focussing on those with high needs, developing intermediate care services and the provision of care to very sheltered housing schemes.

It was proposed to introduce a Commissioning Strategy based on the following principles:

- Most people prefer services delivered where they live.
- People want power and control over their lives.
- Services need to be delivered in response to assessed needs.

The current contracts with independent sector providers were due to run out in October 2002 and the tendering process for new contract would begin in February.

The Cabinet agreed:

To confirm that a detailed Strategy be introduced based on the following principles:

- (i) In House Home Care supports the independent sector in ensuring it meets its workforce training targets.
- (ii) Contracts for the independent sector would be for a larger block amount with a slightly reduced number of providers.
- (iii) An appropriate balance of In House services and independent sector services should be achieved for each locality.
- (iv) A 'Public Service' home care should be provided in partnership with Primary Care Trusts.

104. DELEGATIONS TO SCHOOLS

The Cabinet has considered proposals for new delegations of funding to schools for the 2002/03 financial year.

It was noted that the DfES had confirmed that the target for the delegation of the local schools budget for 2002/03 would be 87% compared with a current delegation rate of 86.5% in Cambridgeshire. In order to address this requirement it was proposed to undertake the following new delegations:

- ICT Added Value (Primary and Special Schools)
- Clothing Allowances (Secondary Schools)
- Out of School Provision (Secondary Schools)

It was projected that the delegation of these areas of funding would result in a delegation level of around 87.3%.

Secondary Headteachers had been consulted on the proposed approach to funding for pupils provided for out of school. It had been agreed that for 2003/04 funds would be delegated for those pupils provided for out of school for behavioural reasons. Delegation would effectively be made to one body made up of school and LEA representatives. The body would then decide upon the allocation of funding to the existing service and to other initiatives and would have responsibility for overseeing provision throughout the year. This approach would reflect the work of the proposed Schools Forum to be introduced in 2003/04 as part of the national funding changes.

The Cabinet agreed:

To approve the proposed new delegations to schools for 2002/03.

105. CRIME AND DISORDER AUDITS

It was noted that this item had been deferred and would be considered at the meeting on 5th March 2002.

106. SINGLE REGENERATION BUDGET

The Cabinet considered the proposed draft delivery plans for the Oxmoor Opportunities and Wisbech Champions Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) programmes.

It was noted that the Oxmoor Opportunities Programme aimed to make Oxmoor a 'safe, vibrant community with opportunities for educational attainment, good health and work for all' and had been awarded £1.48m from SRB round 6. The projects proposed for 2002/03 would be funded from £367,000 SRB Grant and £89,314 match funding from the County Council.

The Wisbech Champions Programme was aimed at enabling 'the community to build its capacity to break the lifelong cycle of deprivation and create better life chances in education, employment, health and community safety' and had been awarded £0.6m from SRB round 5. The projects proposed for 2002/03 would be funded from £189,000 SRB grant and £60,934 match funding from the County Council.

It was noted that it was proposed to work with the Local Strategic Partnerships for these two areas to establish and co-ordinate neighbourhood management arrangements that will run beyond the life of these two SRB programmes.

The Cabinet agreed:

To approve the key delivery plans for the Single Regeneration Budget programmes Oxmoor Opportunities and Wisbech Champions for 2002/03

107. CONNEXIONS BUSINESS PLAN AND FORMATION OF CONNEXIONS COMPANY

The Cabinet considered a report which summarised the Connexions Business Plan for 2003/04 and detailed proposals to establish a Connexions Company

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Connexions had been approved to start from 1st April 2002, subject to submission of a satisfactory Business Plan. The proposed Business Plan was based on the principle that the primary aim for the coming year would be to transmute the Careers Company into the Connexions Service and that the key service focus would be on universal provision, building on the personal learning plan model in schools.

Mr Mike Davey had been appointed Chief Executive of the Connexions Company and other appointments were in the process of being made. The Board of Management would be chaired by an independent Chair and would comprise representatives from a variety of interested agencies, including the Cabinet Member with the appropriate portfolio from the County Council and Peterborough City Council. From both a share ownership and Board membership perspective, the two local authorities would have less than a 50% control of the Company.

The Cabinet agreed:

To approve the Connexions Business Plan and endorse proposals for the Council's involvement in Connexions.

108. DEVELOPING CITIZENS' PANEL AND RELATED CONSULTATION

The Cabinet has considered proposals to develop a partnership approach to Citizens' Panel and public consultation research. The original contract for the provision of the Cambridgeshire Citizens' Panel came to an end in April 2001, but had been extended pending the completion of the Best Value Review of Communications and Consultation.

The Best Value Review recommended that the Council re-tender for the Citizens' Panel contract with a revised specification and develop consultation partnerships with other public service organisations. There were a number of benefits of this approach, including economies of scale and avoidance of consultation fatigue. The proposals were being developed by an officer group involving the County Council, the districts and the Cambridgeshire Constabulary. The proposed specification would be sufficiently flexible to enable all participant authorities to meet their consultation requirements. It was proposed that each constituent authority would vouch to spend up to 'x' amount (specified by themselves and be able to choose from a 'menu' of pre-priced consultation methods as required.

The Cabinet agreed:

To endorse the proposed approach to a joined- up consultation contract between local authorities in Cambridgeshire, and asked that the Leader of the Council be informed of the County Council guaranteed element before the 'shared framework contract' was let.

109. CABINET OUTLINE AGENDA – 13TH FEBRUARY 2002

The Cabinet noted:

The outline agenda for its meeting on 13th February 2002.

Chairman