

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 and were signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendment:

Minute 100 – Public Consultation on Council Priorities

Third paragraph second line 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.
- An Information leaflet 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 options 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 regarding the amount of Council tax increase that they would support as there was a greater acceptance that a higher increase would result in less service cuts. At this later stage one person favoured an increase over 6%, 29 favoured 6%, 27 favoured 5%, 21 preferred 4%, 3 opted for less than 4%, 5 supported no increase and 15 people did not either know or gave different answers.

On the preferred Council tax 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. 7 people supported a 4% increase. 3 expressed no preference between alternative budgets. Those who wanted no increase in Council Tax before the session chose a 4% 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.

In respect of 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 voluntary organisations and the Cambridgeshire Care Partnership were also reported as set out in sections 10-12 of the report "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 Access" 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 Children's Grant and £350,000 from other pressures, including the complexities involved in the interplay amongst Direct Schools Grants, Corporate Overheads and the establishment of Children and Young People's Services. 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 at 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 the draft Budget Book due to further amendments and adjustments.

Councillor Pegram wished to place on record his disquiet regarding approving the capital budget whilst the Council was still uncertain of the amount of debt funding the Government was prepared to support with grant.

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; and
 - 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 noted that it would be one of the first LAAs to be agreed in the first round, following the pilot programme.

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 approves the Local Area Agreement as a new policy framework document.

109. ADDENBROOKE'S ACCESS ROAD

Cabinet received a report seeking 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 on the bridge designs between the original options 2 and 3, (which had received the highest framework scores) while also addressing the environmental issues and providing a lower cost design than the original option 3.

Councillor Orgee one of the local members for Sawston had submitted comments for Cabinet's attention, which were tabled. Regarding the issue of Access road design he indicated that people living in the villages frequently travelled to Cambridge along Hauxton Road or Shelford Road. The Hauxton Road junction of the Access Road and the Access Road / Shelford Road junctions were extremely important. Any hold-ups at these junctions needed to be kept to a minimum so that residents in the southern villages could travel to and from Cambridge as speedily as possible with minimum delays.

In making its decision, he requested that Cabinet ensure that a signalled junction with Harston Road demonstrated shorter queue lengths than a roundabout and that the capacity of the junction was such that queuing was minimised. It was agreed that officers would reply directly to Councillor Orgee on the details he had raised.

On the bridge options, Councillor Orgee agreed with those consulted who had argued that the bridge should have minimum intrusion into the views outwards from the City towards the Gogs and into the City along the green corridor. An open structure was his preferred option and while he would have liked the further options to have been consulted on, he agreed that option 2c was the most likely design to provide an open feel.

In answer to questions raised it was noted that Network Rail had no preferences on any of the options, as they were only concerned with the railway line. In terms of the sensitive area the bridge would be located in, officers were asked to consider carefully the drainage systems to be used.

Cabinet supported the officers' recommendation for bridge design option 2c which provided a more open aspect and which was only slightly more expensive than the original basic design and was still cheaper than the original option 3 design. This option also provided long term environmental and leisure benefits for the area given the expected longevity of the bridge and addressed many of the points raised by consultees.

Cabinet members requested details of the project timelines, which had not been included in the current report.

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

Cabinet received details on the results of the 2005 inspections, Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) judgement and the forward improvement plan. Under the revised CPA methodology changed in 2005 which was a harder test, the Council had achieved

a score of 3 stars with the direction of travel being assessed as “improving well”

The point was made by a number of Cabinet members that it appeared bizarre that the authority previously an excellent authority had now been downgraded but was still said to be “improving well”.

In discussion it was recognised that the first priority would be to consolidate the existing star rating. Promotion to four stars was an aspirational, longer term goal, on the basis that qualification through appropriate service investment would need to be consistent with the Council's own agreed priorities. It was recognised that the Governments' priorities were not always the same as Councils agreed priorities determined by local circumstances.

The Chairman commented that update reports on previous agreed action plans had not always been the subject of regular update reports. Officers were asked to draw up a timetable for reporting on progress on all the improvement plans to future Cabinets.

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:

Additional reports to 7th February included seeking delegations to agree English Partnerships inclusion on Cambridgeshire's Horizons Board and making a response on South Cambridgeshire's Local Development Framework consultation.

Deletion from 7th February agenda of reports on “Review of Shirley Infant and St Andrew's Junior Schools” and “Street Lighting PFI Bid”

Moving the report “Supporting People Distribution Formula – Consultation” from 7th February to 28th February:

Deletion from 28th February of the report on “Travellers Policy” which would come forward later in the year.

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:

- i) Officers should proceed with the procurement of new strategic design partners and to outsource the Council's design resource as part of that process; and
- ii) Officers should proceed with the procurement of strategic framework partners for construction; and
- iii) The detail of the final contracts should be delegated for approval to the portfolio holder for Corporate Services in consultation with the Director of Property and Asset Management.
- iv) Further work should be undertaken concerning the establishment of a Local Education Partnership (LEP).

Chairman
7th February 2006