

## **COUNTY COUNCIL: MINUTES**

**Date:** Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2005

**Time:** 10.30 a.m. – 3.30 p.m.

**Place:** Shire Hall, Cambridge

**Present:** Councillor: S B Normington (Chairman)

Councillors, D Baldwin, C M Ballard, J D Batchelor, I C Bates, B Bean, N Bell, B Boddington, M Bradney, J Broadway, T Butcher, C Carter, L Crossley, M Curtis, P J Downes, J Dutton, J A P Eddy, R Farrar, S A Giles, G Griffiths, B Hardy, N Harrison, D Harty, W G M Hensley, P E Hughes, W Hunt, J L Huppert, C Hyams, S F Johnstone, E Kadić, G Kenney, A C Kent, S G M Kindersley, S J E King, V H Lucas, D McCraith, A K Melton, R Moss-Eccardt, M K Ogden, L J Oliver, A G Orgee, D R Pegram, J A Powley, A A Reid, J E Reynolds, K Reynolds, P Sales, M Shuter, L Sims, M Smith, T Stone, J Toomey, J M Tuck, R Turner, J K Walters, J West, D White, K Wilkins, H Williams, L J Wilson and F H Yeulett

**Apologies:** Councillors P D Bailey, G F Harper, G J Heathcock, J D Jenkins, S Lee and M Williamson

### **20. MINUTES: 17<sup>th</sup> MAY 2005**

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2005 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **21. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### **Death of former County Councillor Baroness Blatch**

The Chairman reported with sadness the death of former County Councillor Baroness Blatch, who had represented the Spaldwick area of the County between 1977 and 1989. Councillors J K Walters and P J Downes paid tribute to Baroness Blatch and members observed a moment's silence in her memory.

#### **Head of Legal Services**

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Tim Farr, who, following his appointment as Head of Legal Services, would be acting as Clerk and Legal Adviser to the Council.

#### **Awards and achievements**

The Chairman led members in congratulating:

- Mark Miller in the Council's Press Office, who had won the Trading Standards Institute's Press Officer of the Year award
- Doug Barnes in Trading Standards, who had won the Legal Metrology

Student of the Year Award from the National Weights and Measures Laboratory

- Alex Chambers, a teacher at Holme Primary School near Yaxley, who had won a regional award for Primary School Teacher of the Year, and Jane Boardman, head teacher of Cherry Hinton Junior School in Cambridge, who had received a commendation in the Primary School Head Teacher of the Year category
- All those who had contributed to the Whitemoor sidings project, a joint initiative between Cambridgeshire County Council, Fenland District Council and Network Rail, which had recently won the top prize in the Rail category of the 2005 Centre for Transport Policy National Transport Awards.

### Senior management structure

The Chairman reported that the Appointments Committee had the previous week made the final appointment to the Council's new senior management structure. She led members in congratulating all Deputy Chief Executives and Directors on their appointments, and in thanking Councillor J E Reynolds, the other members of the Appointments Committee and Human Resources staff for their contributions to the recruitment process.

## **22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following members declared personal interests under Paragraph 8 of the Code of Conduct. The items to which the interests relate are shown in brackets.

- Councillor J L Huppert as a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, which owned land affected by the Chesterton Station proposals, and a resident of the immediate vicinity (Minute 23, Report of the meeting of Cabinet held on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2005, Item 1, Provisional Cambridgeshire Local Transport Plan 2006-11)
- Councillors J D Batchelor, S G M Kindersley, D McCraith and R Turner as members of South Cambridgeshire District Council (Minute 23, Report of the meeting of Cabinet held on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2005, Item 7, South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework July 2005)
- Councillors I C Bates, B Boddington, P J Downes, J A P Eddy, D Harty, C Hyams and K Reynolds as members of Huntingdonshire District Council and Councillor J Dutton as a member of Huntingdonshire District Council and Huntingdon Town Council (Minute 23, Report of the meeting of Cabinet held on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2005, Item 16, Huntingdon Town Centre Project – Library and Archive Centre)
- Councillors J D Batchelor, I C Bates, B Boddington, P J Downes, J Dutton, J A P Eddy, D Harty, C Hyams, S G M Kindersley, D McCraith, K Reynolds and R Turner as members of Huntingdonshire District Council or South Cambridgeshire District Council (Minute 26, Motion on capping).

## **23. REPORTS OF THE CABINET**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor J K Walters, moved receipt of the report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2005 and 14<sup>th</sup> June 2005.

## Meetings held on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2005 and 14<sup>th</sup> June 2005

### Key decisions for information

#### 1) Local Authority Parking Enforcement: Exemption and Charging Policy

Councillor J L Huppert welcomed this policy, which had been developed through the Cambridge City Traffic Management Area Joint Committee (AJC), and thanked the Cabinet for supporting the AJC's view that charges for suspending residents' and metered bays should be reduced to £15.

Councillor C Carter asked for an update on the investigation into parking charges made to health and social care workers on home visits. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services, Councillor J E Reynolds, noted that the investigation was continuing and that a report would be brought to the Cabinet in the autumn.

#### 2) Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) Supplemental Agreement Relating to the Purchase of Land and Construction of a New Warehouse Facility

Councillor R Moss-Eccardt commended the success of ESPO, of which Cambridgeshire was a founder member.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Councillor J A Powley, endorsed this comment and noted that the construction of a new warehouse would help to ensure ESPO's continuing success. He also noted that the risk to the County Council was minimal, as ESPO's assets exceeded any liabilities that could be incurred as a result of the agreement.

### Other decisions for information

#### 3) Changes to the Threshold for Disabled Facilities Grant Applications

Councillor C M Ballard welcomed these changes, as they would mean that smaller aids and adaptations could now be provided without a prior assessment, thereby saving time and money.

#### 4) A14 Ellington to Fen Ditton Public Consultation – County Council Response

Councillors A A Reid and J L Huppert reported that the Liberal Democrat Group did not support the proposal to spend £490 million on improvements to the A14. The Group supported measures to improve safety on the route, but felt that increasing its capacity would discourage the use of public transport and lead to further increases in traffic. The Group was therefore proposing that approximately half of the sum available should be spent on alternative improvements to passenger and freight rail, cycleways, footways, Safer Routes to School and public transport, and on mitigating the impact of the A14 on neighbouring communities. The Group was also concerned that improvements to the A14 would significantly increase the flow of traffic into Cambridge,

making effective demand management in the city essential. Given these concerns, the Group called for sufficient time to be taken to ensure that the optimum solution was developed.

Councillor P Sales called for a 50mph speed limit to be introduced immediately on the dual carriageway section of the A14, to reduce the number of deaths and injuries.

Councillors S F Johnstone, P J Downes, I C Bates and C Hyams, all local members for communities adjacent to the A14, drew attention to the impact of the route on these communities. They drew attention to the need to address rat-running, particularly when accidents occurred, and for environmental measures to reduce the impact of noise and pollution on residents.

Responding, the Lead Member for Environment, Waste and Business, Councillor L J Oliver, recognised that it would be important to minimise the environmental impact of improvements to the A14, particularly noise nuisance to local communities and as carried across the open countryside. However, she noted that the A14 was a major UK transport route and that improvements to the road would be of major economic importance.

A number of members, including the Leader of the Council, Councillor J K Walters, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services, Councillor J E Reynolds, and Councillor I C Bates, emphasised that an upgrade of the A14 was urgently needed and recommended that the proposal now put forward by the Government and the Highways Agency be accepted, to avoid any further delay.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services noted that in the last few days, three MPs and East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire District Councils had signed up to support the County Council's response to the consultation, together with Cambridgeshire's acting Chief Constable, the Chairman of Cambridgeshire Horizons and representatives of the East of England Development Agency, the East of England Regional Assembly, the University of Cambridge and the Chambers of Commerce.

5) Waste Private Finance Initiative (PFI) Procurement

Other matters for information

6) Budget Monitoring

7) Delegations from Cabinet to Cabinet Members and Officers

The Leader of the Council, Councillor J K Walters, moved receipt of the report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2005.

## Meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2005

### Key decisions for determination

#### 1) Provisional Cambridgeshire Local Transport Plan (LTP) 2006-11

It was proposed by the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services, Councillor J E Reynolds and seconded by Councillor J West that the Council

- (i) Approves the revised Local Transport Plan;
- (ii) Authorises the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services, in consultation with the Deputy Chief Executive for Environment and Community Services, to make any detailed changes to the above document necessary prior to its submission to Government;
- (iii) Approves the Rights of Way Improvement Plan;
- (iv) Approves the revised objectives of the Cambridge Core Traffic Scheme.

Councillors A A Reid and J L Huppert reported that the Liberal Democrat Group supported the sections of the LTP on road safety and road maintenance, but not those on accessibility, air quality and congestion. The accessibility strategy was positive for people wishing to make short journeys to their nearest town, but did not show how access to the north of the County would be improved to enable it to share the prosperity of the south. Further measures were needed to improve air quality in towns, including reduced parking charges for non-polluting cars and measures to encourage non-polluting buses. The Local Transport Plan also made no reference to how noise pollution would be addressed. Finally, the Group considered the measures to reduce traffic congestion to be inadequate, given the proportion of funding to spent on the construction of roads as compared with cycleways, footpaths, Safer Routes to School and public transport. The Group also called for road pricing and work place charging to be thoroughly investigated.

Councillor J L Huppert thanked that Cabinet for adjusting the objectives of the Cambridge core traffic scheme to recognise the importance of the visual appearance. He welcomed the inclusion in the LTP of a new station at Chesterton Sidings, which would help to promote modal shift and to improve access from the north of Cambridge. He recommended that the rail crossing over Fen Road be closed and a new access created.

Councillor N Harrison expressed concern that Growth Area Delivery Grant (GADG) might have a negative effect on LTP funding. She noted that the total capital programme for the LTP this year was £2.5 million less than previously, with the reduction apparently to be made up through GADG, suggesting that funding was being re-routed and not actually increased. It appeared that the reduction was made up for by GADG. She asked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community

Services to monitor this closely and to advise how any shortfall in funding would be addressed. She also emphasised the urgency of developing a long-term transport strategy and asked how this would be consulted on and completed.

Councillor C M Ballard acknowledged the policy and resource constraints within which the LTP had been produced. However, he emphasised the need for work on a long-term strategy to start as soon as possible, given that 47,500 new houses were planned for the Cambridge sub-region by 2016, a substantial proportion of which would be in southern Cambridgeshire. With regard to the proposed development on the Marshalls land to the east of Cambridge, Councillor Ballard asked when consultation on this proposal would be carried out and emphasised the importance of considering environmentally sustainable forms of access from this development into the centre of Cambridge.

Councillor J A Powley spoke of the urgent need for the Ely southern bypass. He noted that the A142 ran through East Cambridgeshire, one of the fastest growing areas in East Anglia. Most of the settlements on its route, such as Fordham, Soham, Stuntney and Chatteris, were now all bypassed; Ely, in the middle of the route, needed a bypass as soon as possible.

Councillor P J Downes commented that the LTP did not include details of how road safety would be improved in smaller villages. He noted that reducing the fear of accidents could be as important as reducing accidents; many residents of small villages feared accidents because of the behaviour of drivers travelling through. The policy should also make clear the respective responsibilities of the County Council and the police in implementing and enforcing safety measures.

Councillor A K Melton expressed his support for the LTP, but urged that the next, more detailed version show how links to Fenland from the south of the County would be improved, to help encourage economic prosperity and growth.

Councillor M Curtis called for the more detailed version of the LTP particularly to address transport connections to Whittlesey, including road, bus and rail.

Councillor M K Ogden commented that electrification of the railway line between Whittlesey, March and Peterborough would significantly benefit the County's economy and should be promoted by the County Council.

Councillor J M Tuck commented on the need for rural footpaths to be well maintained, to encourage people to walk instead of drive.

Responding, the Leader of the Council, Councillor J K Walters, noted that members had had the opportunity at numerous Service Development Group meetings to put forward alternative proposals.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services, Councillor J E Reynolds, commented that Growth Area Delivery Grant would make an important contribution to the development of the County.

Cambridgeshire had received £20 million for the first three years and was now entering the third year. The bid to the new scheme currently being submitted through Cambridgeshire Horizons would be for £80 million. Cambridgeshire Horizons and the County would be continuing to emphasise to Government Cambridgeshire's need for additional grant. Councillor Reynolds emphasised that the LTP looked to the future but would have to be taken forward within the constraints of Government policies and funding, meaning that difficult choices would need to be made.

On being put to two separate votes on recommendation (i) and on recommendations (ii) to (iv), all four recommendations were carried.

[Voting pattern: recommendation (i) Conservative and Labour Groups in favour, Liberal Democrat Group against; recommendations (ii) to (iv) unanimous.]

## 2) Youth Justice Strategy and Youth Justice Plan

It was proposed by the Lead Member for Inclusion, Councillor J M Tuck, and seconded by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services, Councillor S F Johnstone, that Council

Approves the Youth Justice Strategy and Youth Justice Plan.

In presenting the proposal, Councillor Tuck tabled a glossary of terms. She emphasised the importance of partnership working to deliver the Strategy and Plan, and of preventative work, rather than addressing offending once it had occurred. She emphasised in particular the role of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships and the District Councils in helping to address anti-social behaviour.

Councillor A C Kent reported that the Liberal Democrat Group supported the Strategy and Plan and also recognised that partnership and preventative working would be essential to their success. She expressed some concern that national performance indicators were not particularly useful and that local ones linking partners' plans would be more informative.

Councillors P Sales and C M Ballard expressed the Labour Group's support for the Strategy and Plan, but sought assurance that measures would be taken to address shortcomings in mental health and substance misuse services, as these were fundamental to preventing offending. The inclusion of the Youth Offending Team in the Office of Children and Young People's Services was welcomed, as this would help to ensure a holistic approach to the needs of families.

On being put to the vote, the recommendation was carried.

[Voting pattern: unanimous.]

## Key decisions for information

### 3) Financial Outturn for 2004/05

Councillor J L Huppert commended the continuing improvement on the prompt payment of invoices. He expressed concern at the £1 million overspend reported for Social Services. Coupled with the delayed repayment of £1 million of overspending from the previous year, this took the overspend to £2 million. The majority of the overspending was on services for children and families, mainly agency placements. He and Councillor C M Ballard emphasised the importance of addressing these issues through the integration of children's services.

Councillor S J E King noted that children's services were demand-led and therefore difficult to plan; more children in need than had been anticipated had come forward during 2004/05.

Councillors J L Huppert, P Sales and C M Ballard expressed concern at the underspend on mental health services and that the service was under-performing to an unacceptable degree. It was noted that over half of the population experienced some form of mental health problem during their life. It was also noted that the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee had looked at mental health services in detail; it was of considerable concern that performance did not seem to be improving.

Councillor C M Ballard noted that there had been an underspend on older people's services. He welcomed the fact that this had been reinvested in services, rather than being clawed back. He also welcomed the improvements in older people's services following the health and social care integration, and noted that this was evidence that service improvements did not necessarily require increased expenditure.

Responding, the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services, Councillor S F Johnstone, drew attention to the loans from the Good Housekeeping Fund that would be used to address overspending and improve in-County children's services.

### 4) Schools Deficit Strategy

Councillor A C Kent expressed support for the strategy proposed, noting that the current schools funding mechanism did not enable the smallest schools to cover all areas of the curriculum, leading to mounting deficits. However, she noted that the additional funding now agreed was one-off and emphasised that a review of the formula was now essential to ensure that these deficits did not recur.

Speaking as the local member for Coleridge, Councillor C M Ballard noted that Coleridge Community College was currently attracting just over one form of entry and as such was not financially viable. A range of options to increase pupil intake had been considered, leading to the federation with Parkside Community College now proposed. He emphasised that for the federation to be successful, it was essential for Coleridge's current debt to be written off and noted that this would also have had to be done had the school closed.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services, Councillor S F Johnstone, emphasised that the current funding measures one-off and that all schools would continue to be required to exercise full financial responsibility.

5) Good Housekeeping Loans

With regard to the IT loan, Councillor R Moss-Eccardt asked for further details of the upgrade now required, what the life of the project would be and how the savings would be generated and repaid.

Councillor A C Kent welcomed the extended timescale for the repayment of the loans to Children and Young People's Services, emphasising the importance of ensuring that children were properly supported within the County.

Councillor C M Ballard also welcomed the proposals relating to Children and Young People's Services. He noted that out-of-County placements could be extremely expensive and that it was more appropriate for children to be placed closer to their homes. He emphasised the importance of ensuring that best value was obtained and commented on the need for comparisons to be made with other local authorities and other providers. He welcomed the investment in fostering services, noting that the ad hoc scrutiny panel on foster care had identified the considerable savings and improvements to be made by reducing the Council's use of independent fostering agencies. He also welcomed the investment in the recruitment and retention of social workers, but expressed concern that as long as neighbouring authorities continued to offer significantly higher salaries for comparable posts, Cambridgeshire would find it difficult to retain employees who had completed their training.

Councillor I C Bates suggested that pressure should be applied to national training bodies to address shortages in the supply of professional social workers on the long term.

Councillor N Harrison noted the importance of ensuring that the Good Housekeeping Fund was fully used, but commented that it should not be seen as an alternative to funding in base budgets when this was more appropriate. She commented that the new Scrutiny Development Co-ordinators would be essential to the proper development of the scrutiny function and noted that scrutiny in Cambridgeshire was still relatively under-resourced as compared with other local authorities.

Councillor P J Downes welcomed the additional funding for scrutiny and noted that other local authorities' experience showed that effective scrutiny could lead to significant savings. However, he noted that these savings could often be short-term rather than long-term, and expressed concern that the main purpose of the new posts should not be to generate savings but to improve the quality of decision-making.

Councillor S J E King welcomed the funding for scrutiny support and suggested that the need to repay the loan would ensure discipline and effective challenge in the Scrutiny Committees' work.

Responding to the speakers, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Councillor J A Powley, agreed to ask the Director of IT to send a written response to Councillor Moss-Eccardt. On training for social workers, he commented that the Council's services deserved appropriately trained staff and that movement of staff between local authorities should not discourage investment in training. He also noted that the scrutiny loan would be kept under close review and emphasised the importance of Scrutiny Committees helping to deliver savings and service improvements.

6) Cambridgeshire's Second Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA)

Councillor J L Huppert expressed serious concern that the terms of Cambridgeshire's second LPSA were still being negotiated with Government, when the performance monitoring element of the agreement had started in October 2004. This meant that the Council would be expected to hit targets retrospectively, without the funding made available to help achieve them. He commented that some of the proposed targets were complex and expressed particular concern as to how it would be ensured that the targets relating to bus patronage and anti-social behaviour were accurately monitored. He also expressed concern that the list of targets had not been readily available to members and asked that all members be notified of the finalised targets in due course.

Councillor J Broadway commented on the target for the reduction in waste going to landfill, suggesting that it could be more stretching.

Responding, the Leader of the Council, Councillor J K Walters, noted that he shared members' concern that the targets had not yet all been finalised, despite performance monitoring being effective from October 2004. He would be raising his concerns with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in due course. Responding to Councillor Broadway, he agreed that landfill should be reduced as much as possible, but noted that the less stretching the target agreed with Government, the greater the Council's chances of obtaining the associated reward grant.

Other decisions for information

7) South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework July 2005

Councillor A A Reid noted that the County Council had registered two objections to South Cambridgeshire District Council's Local Development Framework, relating to green separation policies and the expansion of Northstowe. He suggested that the County Council should have supported both of these policies, as the District Council had put forward good environmental cases for both.

Responding, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services, Councillor J E Reynolds, commented that the Council's submission had been a reiteration of the Cabinet's earlier comments at the consultation stage.

8) Risk Management Process and Strategic Register

Councillor J Broadway asked whether the list of key strategic risks set out in the Council report was in priority order.

Councillor T Stone noted that significant work had gone into the compilation of the strategic risk register, which would be discussed in detail at the meeting of the Audit and Accounts Committee the following day.

Councillors Broadway and Stone suggested that failure to maintain the Council's current 'excellent' Comprehensive Performance Assessment rating, whilst important to the Council, did not present as great a risk as some of the other issues included on the list.

Councillor C M Ballard welcomed the compilation of a Risk Register for 2005/06 but emphasised the importance of also developing a longer-term strategy for risk management, looking three to four years ahead.

Responding, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Councillor J A Powley, noted that the key strategic risks were in no particular order. The Leader of the Council, Councillor J K Walters, explained that the prioritisation related to the selection of these risks as opposed to others not included on the list. He emphasised the importance of embedding risk management in all of the Council's activities and noted that it was for this reason that Cabinet had rejected the suggestion of a separate Risk Management Champion in each Office.

9) Corporate Procurement Strategy

Councillor P J Downes emphasised that to ensure value for money on contracts awarded by the Council, it was essential to monitor effectively the quality of the work carried out by contractors. This comment was endorsed by the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Councillor J A Powley.

10) Beacon Council Application

11) Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) Value for Money Self-Assessment

12) Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) Strategy – Interim Statement

13) Waste Private Finance Initiative (PFI) Procurement – Process for Approval of Land Acquisitions

Other matters for information

14) Inspection of Social Care Services for Disabled People September 2004 – Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) Report

Councillor A A Reid urged the Cabinet to give the report and its recommendations their serious attention. He highlighted the gravity of CSCI's findings, that the Council was not serving people well (the lowest

of the four possible ratings in this category) and that its capacity for improvement was uncertain.

Councillor G Griffiths drew attention to a number of criticisms listed in the report, including poor communication with clients, limited access to day services and the premature closure of day centres before alternative direct payment arrangements were in place. She commented that it was a poor report for a Council that had a Comprehensive Performance Assessment 'excellent' rating and suggested that it could undermine this rating.

Councillor E Hughes expressed concern that the report identified budget deficits affecting some of the most vulnerable members of the community, at a time when underspends had been identified for some other services. Given CSCI's finding that the Council's capacity for improvement was uncertain, she questioned what progress the Council would be able to make.

Councillor C M Ballard highlighted a number of criticisms in the report, including social isolation of clients, failure to support their carers and children, and inadequate provision of benefits advice. He welcomed the recognition now being given to the need to improve these services, but expressed concern that all improvements were still planned within existing budgets, with the exception of additional investment in direct payments and the extension of advocacy services. He expressed concern at the risk that this report posed to the Council's star rating for adult social services, now separate from the star rating for children's social services, and to its CPA score. He emphasised the need to integrate health and social care services for adults with physical disability services as soon as possible, commenting that this was the most effective way of improving services within existing budgets.

Councillor G Kenney acknowledged that adults with physical disabilities had not been well served in the past, but emphasised the importance of focusing now on how best to take services forwards.

Responding, the Lead Member for Community Learning and Adult Social Care, Councillor F H Yeulett, recognised the need to improve services and noted that a number of initiatives were already being taken forward, including the appointment of a Carers' Strategy Manager, the promotion of direct payments and work to increase independent providers' capacity.

15) Monitoring of Recommendations of Joint Review Action Plan

16) Huntingdon Town Centre Project – Library and Archive Centre

Councillor C Hyams welcomed the steps being taken by the County Council to revitalise Huntingdon town centre and commented on the importance of the large number of County Council employees working in and from the town centre.

Councillor P J Downes welcomed the continuing discussion between the County Council and Huntingdonshire District Council about possible shared facilities and emphasised that these were likely to enable the

most cost-effective and efficient delivery of public services.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Councillor J A Powley, welcomed these comments and noted that the proposals had the full support of the Corporate Services Service Development Group and the Cabinet.

17) Former Howard Mallet Centre, Cambridge

## 24. WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Five written questions had been submitted under Rule 9 of the Council Procedure Rules:

- Councillor C M Ballard had asked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services, Councillor J E Reynolds, about welfare benefits advice provided by Citizens Advice Bureaux on behalf of the County Council. The response set out the number of contacts made to date, categorised by client group; the state of these clients' applications; and the annualised totals of new benefit payments generated per client group. The response also set out the postcodes of people assisted, which covered 61 District Council wards.
- Councillor G J Heathcock had asked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services about Council action to promote rail provision within the County. The response set out information on the Thameslink-Great Northern franchise and on discussions concerning a station at Soham and the re-opening of the railway line between Soham and Wisbech.
- Councillor J L Huppert had asked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services about the administrative costs of Cambridgeshire Horizons Ltd. The response set out the running costs of Cambridgeshire Horizons for 2004/05, detailing staff costs and expenditure on PR. The response also set out the Council's contribution to the activities of Cambridgeshire Horizons as a proportion of the company's total expenditure.
- Councillor N Bell had asked the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services, Councillor S F Johnstone, about expenditure on school lunches and the promotion of healthy eating. The response explained that Cambridgeshire Catering Services spent on average 73p per day for a secondary school meal and 43p for a primary school meal. The Council was actively engaged in a number of initiatives to promote healthy eating in schools.
- Councillor J L Huppert had asked the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services about the deficit on the school staff absence fund and the clawing back of sums from schools to address this deficit. The response set out the history of the fund and the steps now being taken to address the deficit that had arisen.

Copies of the questions and responses are available from Democratic Services.

## 25. ORAL QUESTIONS

Three oral questions were asked under Council Procedure Rule 9:

- Councillor J L Huppert asked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services, Councillor J E Reynolds, whether the County Council would be submitting a petition in response to the Crossrail Bill. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services noted that this Bill, which proposed an east-west rail route north of London, was going through Parliament at present. The County Council would make representations through the East of England Regional Assembly and would not be submitting a separate petition.
- Councillor A C Kent asked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services how, given the limited funding available, the Cambridge southern corridor cycleway improvements agreed earlier in the year would be prioritised. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services noted that it was hoped that over time, Growth Area Delivery Grant would enable all of the improvements to be delivered. He agreed to send a written response to Councillor Kent setting out how the improvements would be prioritised on the short term.
- Councillor J Toomey asked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services whether it was intended to upgrade the street lighting on the Romsey section of Mill Road in Cambridge to the same standard as that on the Petersfield section. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services agreed to send a written response.

A transcript of the questions and responses is available from Democratic Services.

## 26. MOTION

Under Rule 10 of the Council Procedure Rules, Councillor J L Huppert moved the motion set out on the Council agenda concerning the capping of Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire District Councils. In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12.7, he sought and received the agreement of Council to table an updated motion, reflecting events that had occurred since the dispatch of the agenda. The revised motion was seconded by Councillor J Broadway and read as follows:

'Cambridgeshire County Council:

- Noting with great concern that two District Councils within the County's area have been subjected to capping by the Government
- Aware that this would cause significant problems with service delivery for Cambridgeshire residents throughout the County
- Highlighting the amount of partnership working between the two capped Councils and other bodies, including the County Council, in the region

- Alarmed at the consequences for the whole sub-region should capping result in a decrease in planning capacity,
- 1. Disagrees in principle with the decision to cap South Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire District Councils;
- 2. Urges the Government to reconsider its decision to cap these Councils;
- 3. Calls upon the Government to provide urgent transitional funding to ensure that jointly provided services do not suffer, and the partnership working between the capped Councils and other bodies is retained.

Councillor Huppert also circulated as background information press releases on the capping that had been issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and by the Leaders of Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire District Councils.

Speakers supporting the motion noted that:

- The capping of District Council budgets was relevant to the County Council, as it would affect a high proportion of Cambridgeshire's residents
- Local authorities were elected by local people and represented their views. Both Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire had consulted on their proposed increases and had found considerable local support
- South Cambridgeshire's Council Tax for 2004/05 had been the fourth lowest nationally, and even with the 100% increase proposed would still be below the national average
- The capping mechanism, which was based on percentage increases rather than expenditure, was crude and unhelpful
- The proposed capping of South Cambridgeshire would reduce its budget by £2.6 million or 18%, which would significantly impact on partnership working and place increased pressure on County Council budgets. South Cambridgeshire also had a number of budgets that were jointly funded with Cambridge City Council
- The sums involved, particularly for Huntingdonshire, were not large when considered as a proportion of residents' overall Council Tax bills
- The costs of rebilling Council Tax payers would be significant.

Speakers opposing the motion noted that:

- The District Councils' Council Tax levels were not of direct concern to the County Council
- No similar motion had been proposed when Fenland District Council had been capped the previous year
- The Government had made clear its views on acceptable Council Tax increases. Local authorities should be encouraged to take a long-term approach to their financial planning
- Huntingdonshire's proposed increase and consequent cap were modest and would not impact significantly on partnership working
- South Cambridgeshire's proposed 100% increase was excessive and would impact negatively on Council Tax payers
- South Cambridgeshire might not have been capped, had it made more modest increases to its Council Tax in previous years.

On being put to the vote, the motion was defeated.

[Voting pattern: Liberal Democrats in favour, Conservatives against, Labour Group abstained.]

## **27. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES**

The following changes to Committee memberships were proposed by the Chairman, Councillor S B Normington, seconded by the Vice-Chairman, Councillor A G Orgee, and agreed unanimously:

- Councillor H Williams to replace Councillor D Jenkins as a member of the Environment and Community Services Scrutiny Committee
- Councillor M Williamson to be appointed as a substitute member of the Environment and Community Services Scrutiny Committee
- Councillor J West to replace Councillor G J Harper as a member of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee
- Councillor J Broadway to replace Councillor S G M Kindersley as a member of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee
- Councillor G J Harper to replace Councillor J West as a member of the Environment and Community Services Scrutiny Committee
- Councillor B Hardy to replace Councillor M Curtis as a substitute member of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee
- Councillor M Curtis to replace Councillor B Hardy as a substitute member of the Environment and Community Services Scrutiny Committee
- Councillor G Griffiths to replace Councillor J L Huppert as a substitute member of the Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee
- Councillor R Farrer to replace Councillor A K Melton as a member of the Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee
- Councillor A K Melton to replace Councillor R Farrer as a substitute member of the Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee
- Councillor S G M Kindersley to be appointed as a substitute member of the Development Control Committee
- Councillors L Crossley and G J Heathcock to be appointed to the pool of members for appointment to the Service Appeals Committee
- Councillor T Stone to replace Councillor J D Batchelor as a substitute member of the South Cambridgeshire Traffic Management Area Joint Committee.

Chairman: