

## **COUNTY COUNCIL: MINUTES**

**Date:** Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2006

**Time:** 10.30 a.m. – 12.45 p.m.

**Place:** Shire Hall, Cambridge

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

Councillors P D Bailey, D Baldwin, C M Ballard, J D Batchelor, I C Bates, B Bean, N Bell, B Boddington, M Bradney, J Broadway, P Brown, T Butcher, C Carter, S Criswell, M Curtis, A Douglas, P J Downes, R Farrer, S A Giles, G Griffiths, B Hardy, G F Harper, N Harrison, D Harty, G J Heathcock, W G M Hensley, P E Hughes, W Hunt, J L Huppert, C Hyams, J D Jenkins, S F Johnstone, G Kenney, A C Kent, S G M Kindersley, S J E King, V H Lucas, D McCraith, L W McGuire, 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 M Tuck, R Turner, J K Walters, J West, K Wilkins, M Williamson, L J Wilson and F H Yeulett

**Apologies:** Councillors J Dutton, E Kadić, D White and H Williams

### **115. MINUTES: 17<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2006**

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2006 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **116. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### Awards and achievements

The Chairman led members in congratulating:

- Mark Shelton, the Council's Waste Policy Manager, on being acknowledged as Local Authority Recycling Champion at a recent awards ceremony hosted by letsrecycle.com
- Everyone involved in the Cambridgeshire Compost Partnership, which had recently won a silver in the partnership category of the 'Green Apple Awards' given by the Green Organisation.

### **117. 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.

- Councillors Batchelor, Kindersley, McCraith, Orgee and Turner as members of South Cambridgeshire District Council and Councillor Kindersley as Vice-Chairman of the District Council's Planning Committee (Minute 119, Report

of the Cabinet Meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2006, Item 11, Growth Area Progress)

- Councillor Batchelor as the Chairman of Linton Action for Youth (Minute 119, Report of the Cabinet Meeting held on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2006, Item 7, Issues Arising from Scrutiny Committees: Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee Youth Services Sub-Group – Interim Report)
- Councillor King as the Chairman of the Bowthorpe Centre in Wisbech (Minute 119, Report of the Cabinet Meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2006, Item 7, Corporate Assessment and Direction of Travel Inspection)

The following member a declared prejudicial interest under Paragraph 10 of the Code of Conduct. She left the meeting whilst this item was discussed.

- Councillor Johnstone as her sister was an employee of Xansa (Minute 119, Report of the Cabinet meeting held on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2006, Item 4, Shared Services and the e-Business Suite).

## **118. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

The Council noted that no questions had been received from members of the public.

## **119. REPORTS OF CABINET MEETINGS**

### **Meeting held on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2006**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Walters, moved receipt of the report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2006.

#### Key decisions for information

#### 1) Waste Private Finance Initiative (PFI) Project

Councillors Reid and Hughes congratulated all members and officers who had contributed to the success of the Waste PFI project. Councillor Reid welcomed the decision to award the contract to a local firm offering environmentally friendly and flexible technology. He noted that there was the possibility of establishing a plant with zero carbon emissions and urged for this opportunity to be pursued. Councillor Hughes emphasised the need to continue with public education initiatives to increase recycling.

Responding, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services, Councillor J Reynolds, thanked members and noted that innovative opportunities would be pursued as far as possible.

#### 2) Huntingdon to St Ives Bus Priority Measures – Revision of Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO)

### 3) Disability Equality Scheme

Councillor Ballard welcomed the publication of the Disability Equality Scheme, noting that it represented a significant step in the Council's discharge of its responsibilities towards people with a disability. The Council was now not only required to make sure that its buildings were accessible, but to take further steps such as ensuring that information was available in accessible formats and that schools were accessible to disabled parents as well as to disabled pupils. The overall aim was to ensure equity for people with a disability. Councillor Ballard suggested two further measures that the Council should pursue: improved engagement of disabled people and their carers in consultations, and the creation of a health and social care partnership to deliver services for adults with a physical disability.

Councillor Hughes highlighted the positive contributions that people with a disability could make to society and emphasised that the Council should focus on these, rather than on the cost of adaptations needed to enable people with a disability to participate.

Councillor Kent commented that discussions at Cabinet meetings could be difficult to hear, particularly for people with hearing impairments, and suggested that microphones should be used at these meetings.

Speaking as the Cabinet Lead on Diversity, Councillor Lucas welcomed members' comments and agreed that the Disability Equality Scheme would be essential to ensuring that people with a disability were able to participate fully in their communities. He also noted that the Council was already working closely with partner agencies to make best use of limited resources.

### 4) Shared Services and the e-Business Suite

Councillor Sales reported that the Labour Group recognised the need to develop shared services, to help ensure economies of scale. However, the Group was concerned at Cabinet's decision to make working with Xansa its preferred option, because of Xansa's track record, particularly in using offshore working arrangements. Offshore working would mean reduced opportunities for local employment. Members were also concerned about the security of personal data held overseas. Councillor Moss-Eccardt also expressed concern about the increased risk of identity theft and fraud if data was held overseas.

Councillor Downes expressed support for the general principle of shared services to improve cost-effectiveness. However, he expressed concern at the suggestion that following the Comprehensive Spending Review, the Treasury would assume that local authorities were operating shared services and would reduce grant levels accordingly. If this happened, it would mean that there were no real savings generated for release to front-line services. He also asked to be advised of the latest comments from the trade unions on the initiative.

Responding, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Councillor Powley, welcomed the speakers' support. He emphasised that Cabinet

had not yet taken any firm decisions on the way forwards. Further opportunities for member consideration before a final decision was taken would include Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2007 and Corporate Services Service Development Group on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2007. He reported that Northamptonshire County Council had now agreed to work with Cambridgeshire in developing shared services. In Cambridgeshire, a Programme Board had been set up, chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive – Corporate Services. Work streams addressing the business case, contract specification, staffing, consultation, legal and governance issues and communications had been established. Work on alternative options was also taking place, in case the Xansa initiative did not proceed.

#### Other decisions

##### 5) Travel for Work Strategy and Shire Hall Travel for Work Plan

Councillor King emphasised the importance of linking Travel for Work to the Council's Office Accommodation Strategy, Workwise, since both initiatives included opportunities to improve flexible working.

Councillor Moss-Eccardt highlighted the need for Travel for Work initiatives to take into account the effect on communities neighbouring Council offices, since reductions to on-site parking could lead to more on-street parking nearby.

Councillor Reid welcomed the Travel for Work initiatives. However, he suggested that all forms of carbon emission by the Council should be evaluated in detail and priority given to those that were largest and which there was most scope to reduce.

Councillor Broadway suggested that the Council should make greater use of audio and video conferencing, which would reduce members' and officers' need to travel and would also save time.

Councillor Hughes welcomed the Travel for Work initiatives, noting that reductions to car travel also had health and safety benefits for employees, reducing their stress levels and their likelihood of having road accidents.

Responding, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Councillor Powley, reminded members that Travel for Work initiatives focussed on reducing travel between sites, as well as changing employees' patterns of travel to work. He agreed that full use should be made of available technology and also agreed that clear links should be made between Travel for Work and other plans such as the People Strategy, the Environment Strategy and the Office Accommodation Strategy.

##### 6) Consultation Response on Bell School Planning Application

7) Issues Arising from Scrutiny Committees: Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee Youth Services Sub-Group – Interim Report

Councillor Batchelor reported that he had attended the Cabinet meeting to present the Scrutiny Committee's report on Youth Services. He expressed disappointment that Cabinet had not accepted the Committee's unanimous recommendations, especially since Government had recommended that the Youth Service be funded at £4.5 million per annum, as compared with £2.3 million in 2006/07. Cabinet had previously suggested that they would increase funding for the Service by modest annual increments, but no longer appeared to be pursuing this policy. He emphasised that the Youth Service had a key role in delivering preventative services and asked Cabinet to review its decision accordingly.

Councillor Hughes commented that youth workers should be able to focus on delivering good quality services to young people. The County Council was responsible for developing policy and strategy and should ensure that services were properly funded, rather than leaving youth workers to pursue funding themselves.

Councillor Kent reminded members of the action plan developed following the Ofsted inspection of the Youth Service two years previously. She asked the Lead Member for Learning, Councillor Lucas, what progress had been made against the action plan, expressing concern that the Scrutiny Committee had identified some shortcomings.

Councillor King congratulated the Scrutiny Committee on its detailed work on the Youth Service, but noted the need for realism over funding; the Council faced significant financial pressures and would have to make difficult decisions in allocating resources.

Councillor Curtis urged members to focus on the good youth services already being delivered by the locality teams in partnership with other agencies.

Responding, the Lead Member for Learning, Councillor Lucas, noted that the action plan resulting from the Ofsted inspection of the Youth Service had focussed primarily on improvements to management systems, to ensure best use of limited resources. Significant changes had taken place since the inspection, including the creation of the Office of Children and Young People's Services and the establishment of locality teams. These changes were supporting the development of a more effective Youth Service, underpinned by effective partnership working.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services, Councillor Johnstone, and the Lead Member for Inclusion, Councillor Tuck, both expressed sympathy for the Scrutiny Committee's views and emphasised that they had been given full consideration. The Cabinet Member reminded members that Cabinet had increased funding for the Youth Service by £300,000 in the current year. However, the recent public consultation had not identified the Youth Service as a high priority, which made it difficult to justify further increases at a time when funding was limited and there were many competing demands. The Lead

Member noted that every effort would be made to extend learning from initiatives such as the Fusion project on the Oxmoor across the rest of the County.

Councillor Kenney referred to another member led review on outcomes for young offenders, on which a report had recently been brought to the CYPS Scrutiny Committee. She expressed disappointment that the Committee had agreed not to refer the report to Cabinet at this stage, but to defer it pending further work. Responding, Councillors Griffiths and Downes noted that a majority of Committee members had felt that further investigation was appropriate before bringing a report to Cabinet, especially since the review team had not yet spoken to any young offenders or been on any site visits.

8) Top 30 Performance Indicators 2006/07 and Performance Monitoring Quarter 2

Councillor Jenkins expressed disappointment that the Council report did not include full details of those indicators against which performance was worsening. Of these indicators, he particularly highlighted the one on numbers of older people helped to live at home, which had been below target for some time. A recent report from the Commission for Social Care Inspection had ranked Cambridgeshire's adult services joint bottom nationally. This was not satisfactory, especially given the increasing numbers of older people needing support. He called on the Lead Member for Community Learning and Development and Adult Social Care, Councillor Yeulett, to ensure that services were properly funded and that performance improved.

Councillor Hughes expressed concern that the Cabinet report had shown that the target for the educational attainment of young people leaving care had been missed. She commented that these were some of the most vulnerable of the County's young people, who needed particular support in making the transition from school to adult life.

9) Annual Adoption and Permanence Report April 2005 to March 2006

Councillors Carter and Kenney paid tribute to the social workers who supported the work of the Fostering and Adoption Panels.

The Lead Member for Inclusion, Councillor Tuck, also thanked the members and officers involved and reported that Andrew Lansley MP had recently written commending the work of the Panels.

### **Meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2006**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Walters, moved receipt of the report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2006.

#### Key decisions for determination

1) Early Termination Discretionary Compensation

The following policy revisions and recommendations were proposed by

the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Councillor Powley, seconded by the Deputy Leader, Councillor J Reynolds, and agreed unanimously:

#### General Policy Recommendations

- i) That the revised discretions policy approach should not adversely reduce terms and conditions of employment for County Council employees.
- ii) That the County Council should continue not to seek to use the Local Government Pensions Scheme (LGPS) augmentation regulation provisions due to the costs and complexities this entails.
- iii) That these revised policy arrangements be reviewed after 6 months of operation to manage any identified risks and emerging issues arising from the age equality regulations.

#### Transitional Protection Recommendation

- iv) That the County Council accepts the provisions of the transitional protection arrangements, enabling the use of existing discretions to award compensatory added years for any protected employees made redundant by the authority before 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007.

#### Redundancy Policy Recommendations

- v) That the redundancy policy will remain calculated on actual weeks' pay, rather than statutory redundancy provisions.
- vi) That the revised redundancy policy for employees not covered by the transitional protection arrangements be to award an overall lump sum of 1½ times the initial redundancy payment to all employees with 2 or more years' continuous employment with Cambridgeshire County Council, regardless of their membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme with effect from 29<sup>th</sup> November 2006.
- vii) That the revised redundancy policy for all employees be to award an overall lump sum of 1½ times the redundancy payment to employees with 2 or more years' continuous employment with Cambridgeshire County Council, regardless of their membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme, with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007.

#### PRIEEAF Policy Recommendations

- viii) Recommend to the County Council that the revised Premature Retirement in the Interest of the Efficient Exercise of the Authority's Functions (PRIEEAF) policy for the County Council should remove the discretion to award compensatory added years with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007 and replace this with a flexible approach to award a lump sum of up to 104 weeks' pay.

2) Child Employment – Impact of Recent Legislation Changes with regard to Children Working in Licensing Premises

The following recommendation was proposed by the Lead Member for Inclusion, Councillor Tuck, seconded by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People’s Services, Councillor Johnstone, and agreed unanimously:

That the County Council Child Employment Byelaws, which currently prohibit children from serving or delivering alcohol other than in sealed containers, be amended and thereby strengthened through the inclusion of a sub-section specifically prohibiting children aged between 13 and 16 from ‘working in a bar area while the bar is open’.

The CCC byelaws currently state that:

‘No child of any age may be employed to sell or deliver alcohol, except in sealed containers.’

It is proposed accordingly to amend the byelaws to state that:

‘No child may be employed:

- To sell or deliver alcohol, except in sealed containers;
- In a bar area while the bar is open.’

Key decisions for information

3) Hills Road Bus Link Scheme Approval and Approval for Compulsory Purchase

Councillor Ballard highlighted the relationship between the link road for public transport, cyclists and pedestrians from the south of Cambridge station to the junction of Hills Road and Brooklands Avenue, and the recent consultation on the Hills Road bridge. The consultation had concluded that most of the problems with the bridge were due to the operation of the junctions at either end. Care would therefore need to be taken to ensure that the new link road to the Brooklands Avenue junction did not add to these problems.

Councillor Kent emphasised the importance of the new link road for pedestrians and noted that the planning permission for recent development on Brooklands Avenue had included a requirement for new pedestrian crossings.

These comments were accepted by the Lead Member for Transport and Delivery, Councillor McGuire.

4) Household Waste Recycling Strategy

5) Overarching Enforcement Policy and Age-Restricted Goods



6) Primary Education in Brampton

Other decisions

7) Corporate Assessment and Direction of Travel Inspection

Councillor Jenkins questioned the realism of Cambridgeshire's Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) self-assessed scores, given that the Council had been projecting substantial overspends at mid-year, its adult services had been ranked joint bottom nationally, and it was spending significantly on external contractors.

Councillor Harrison particularly challenged the self-assessed score of 4 on 'Capacity', noting that the Commission for Social Care Inspection had found that the Council's adult services had uncertain prospects for improvement. She also expressed concern at the expensive production of the self-assessment documentation, given the Council's limited resources.

Responding, the Leader of the Council, Councillor Walters noted the need for the Council's CPA self-assessment to balance realism with proper recognition of achievements and potential. The self-assessment had been discussed with representatives of all political groups at the CPA Member Group. The Leader of the Council also commented that the forthcoming debates on the budget would give the Opposition groups the opportunity to put forward alternative budget proposals, showing how they would prioritise spending and service improvements. On adult services, he acknowledged that performance on numbers of older people helped to live at home was low, but noted that investigation was currently being carried out into whether this was solely a performance issue, or whether Cambridgeshire might also be reporting differently from other local authorities.

8) Public Consultation on Council Priorities

Councillor Huppert commented that there were some limitations to the survey methodology, meaning that the response to this consultation should not be taken as a straightforward action list. His group would be preparing an alternative budget, setting out their priorities for spending. On guidance and teaching values to children, he noted that recognition should be given to people with no faith as well as to those with Christian and other faiths.

Councillor Reid suggested that the survey methodology should be changed to enable respondents to rank their priorities and indicate where they thought most resources should be spent.

Councillor Ballard emphasised the need to continue to support those services identified by the public as being of lower priority, including public and community transport, family support and services for looked after children, archives, arts and museums, and youth services.

Councillor Oliver agreed that archives, arts and museums should remain a priority. She also commented that libraries should be supported to meet changing needs, to the benefit of present and future residents.

Responding, the Leader of the Council, Councillor Walters, commented that he would be reluctant to change the survey methodology. He reminded members that respondents had placed care for the elderly and primary and secondary education as highest priority; these were also the Council's highest priority services.

9) Consultation Response on Clay Farm/Showground Planning Application

Speaking as the local member, Councillor Kent reminded members that this was the third of five planning applications expected for the Cambridge Southern Fringe. She expressed concern that despite the City Council's adoption of an Area Development Framework, which set out clear expectations of the community features required from the developers, these features were repeatedly being omitted from planning applications. She expressed particular concern about provision for secondary education on the Southern Fringe, given that an additional five forms of entry were expected. She suggested that provision of a secondary school on the Southern Fringe would be essential to the development of the new community.

Councillor Ballard commented that decisions about a possible new secondary school on the Southern Fringe would affect the future of Coleridge Community College. He reported that the Labour Group would wish to see secondary education continuing to be provided from the existing Coleridge site. The federation of Coleridge with Parkside School was proving very successful, with standards going up.

The Lead Member for Environment, Councillor Oliver, welcomed the strength and detail of the Council's response to the planning application on a range of environmental issues including climate change, waste, energy management and water efficiency.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services, Councillor Johnstone, confirmed that the County Council would be seeking new educational provision on the Southern Fringe at both primary and secondary level. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services, Councillor J Reynolds, confirmed that the revised draft of the Council's response to the planning application had now been sent to Councillor Kent, following discussion at Cabinet the previous week.

10) Budget Monitoring 2006/07

Councillor Huppert thanked the Leader of the Council for making full details of the Office financial recovery plans publicly available. He expressed concern that the cuts identified in these plans, including cuts to respite care, adult social care, disabled parking, the libraries' book fund and road maintenance, suggested that the original budget had been inadequate. He also queried the reason for differences between reports of the projected overspends. He noted that the Office of Children and

Young People's Services was forecasting a balanced budget at year-end, but only with the use of £428,000 from reserves and £1 million of non-recurrent savings. He also expressed concern at a recent report in the Cambridge Evening News that the Council was spending £12.6 million on agency and temporary staff, noting that this was not an efficient way of working. He welcomed Cabinet's agreement of the recommendation from the Environment and Community Services Scrutiny Committee [Item 13 below] that processes be reviewed for the future.

Councillor Moss-Eccardt reminded members of his question at the previous meeting of Council on immigration into the County. The response he had received had not included forecasts of rates of immigration for 2006/07; he asked if these had been made. Councillor Moss-Eccardt also expressed concern that financial overspends and virements within Environment and Community Services meant that parts of the highways maintenance budget were being used to support adult services, which residents found hard to understand.

Councillor Jenkins expressed concern at the effect that the overspends were having on the Council's new highways maintenance contract with Atkins. Initially, officers had said that the contract would need time to bed in; now, because of savings and virements, activities were having to be curtailed.

Councillor Heathcock noted that the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee had been advised that the recovery plan for adult services required input from the Cambridgeshire Primary Care Trust, who were themselves in a very difficult financial position. He requested an update on negotiations.

Councillor Ballard also welcomed the report of the Environment and Community Services Scrutiny Committee, noting that mid-year virements between budget heads were not desirable, although they could sometimes be necessary to achieve financial balance. He expressed concern at the gravity of the financial situation faced by the Council for the coming year.

Responding, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Councillor Powley, emphasised that the measures contained in the financial recovery plans would be to bring expenditure back to budget; there would be no cuts to the 2006/07 base budget. He noted that the £12.6 million quoted in the Cambridge Evening News for the Council's expenditure on agency staff included expenditure on school supply teachers, who were paid for from schools' budgets. The Audit Commission had recently reviewed the Council's CPA Use of Resources scores and, although the results would not be formally announced until February, the Council was thought to have made significant improvements under a number of headings.

#### 11) Growth Area Progress

Councillor Huppert emphasised the need for effective joint decision-making arrangements between the County Council, Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council for bringing forward

the major growth planned for the area. These should include appropriate local political representation, as had been achieved for the Traffic Management Area Joint Committees.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services, Councillor J Reynolds, reported that discussions about the joint arrangements were continuing. It was expected that reports would be brought to Cabinet in January and Council in February.

12) 2007/08 Grant Settlement: Key Messages and Financial Impact

Councillor Downes highlighted the Council's difficult financial position and the limited room for manoeuvre resulting from the Government's Council Tax capping policy. The Department for Communities and Local Government had recently stated that they expected both the average and the maximum Council Tax increase for 2007/08 to be 5%. Councillor Downes also noted that Cambridgeshire's Council Tax was low compared with those of many other local authorities. He therefore suggested that the Cabinet should review its previously stated intention of setting decreasing Council Tax increases of 5% in 2007/08, 4.5% in 2008/09 and 4% in 2009/10. He also requested more detailed information about Cambridgeshire's move away from the funding floor and the indication of a 'comparative demographic/deprivation rate shift'.

[Responding, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Councillor Powley, agreed to provide a written response to the question from Councillor Downes. He noted that Cambridgeshire's move away from the funding floor for 2007/08 would mean that the Council would lose £350,000 to contribute to authorities at the floor. He emphasised that Council Tax increases in excess of 5% were not advisable, since these were highly likely to be capped, incurring expenses to the Council.](#)

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Walters, reported that given the uncertainty at this stage surrounding the Comprehensive Spending Review and the Council's future financial settlements, he would be seeking support from Cabinet and Council for a Council Tax increase of 5% in 2007/08 and indicative increases of 5% in 2008/09 and 2009/10.

13) Report from Environment and Community Services Scrutiny Committee: Office of Environment and Community Services Recovery Plan

14) Petitions

## 120. WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Two written questions had been submitted under Council Procedure Rule 9:

- Councillor Huppert had asked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services, Councillor J Reynolds for an update on current and projected expenditure on the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway, the funding sources that would be used to meet these costs, the activities taking place and the anticipated completion date for the scheme. The response set out the information requested.

- Councillor Huppert had asked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services about the specification for street lighting columns in the County and the recent installation of new street lighting columns in Chatteris. The response set out the information requested.

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

## 121. ORAL QUESTIONS

Seven oral questions were asked under Council Procedure Rule 9:

- [Councillor Heathcock asked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services, Councillor J Reynolds, whether the County Council was continuing to subscribe to proposals for an east-west rail link. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services commented that the Council was continuing to discuss with all partners how improvements to rail services could be supported. He agreed to provide a detailed written response.](#)
- Councillor Huppert asked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services about the current consultation on contracted bus services. He asked the Cabinet Member to check the accuracy of some of the passenger data being used, expressing particular concern about the figures for the X14 Huntingdon to Cambridge Science Park service. With regard to this service, he also questioned whether it should be reduced, given that it was following what would in future be the route of the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway. Responding, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services noted that information about the consultation had been sent to all members on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2006. Further details were available from the Local Passenger Transport Manager on request. With regard to the X14, he noted that discussions were taking place about the possible integration of services to Cambridge Regional College and to the Science Park, since many buses serving these sites were empty on their return journeys.
- Councillor Moss-Eccardt highlighted recent reports in the media about the proposed closure of significant numbers of Post Offices. He noted that Post Offices played an important role in their communities and asked the Leader of the Council to make representations to Government on behalf of the Council regretting the proposed reductions to the Post Office network. The Leader of the Council agreed to do this. He noted that he had already been party to East of England Regional Assembly representations to Government. He also noted that the Council could assist in providing accommodation for sub-branches, as had been done in Bar Hill, and invited local members to make further suggestions for schemes of this sort.
- Councillor Downes asked to be advised of the opportunity costs, in terms of member and officer time, of the Council's recent preparations for the Comprehensive Performance Assessment and Joint Area Review inspections. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Walters, commented that he shared the member's concerns about the costs of these inspections. He agreed to discuss with the Deputy Chief Executive – Corporate Services whether it would be realistic to cost the work undertaken.

- Councillor Bell asked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services, Councillor J Reynolds, to join him in condemning the Government's decision to allow field trials of genetically modified potatoes within the County. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services noted that this was a Government decision and that people opposed to it should write to their Member of Parliament. He declined a request from Councillor Bell to write to the Government on behalf of the Council.
- Councillor Hughes referred to the written response provided by the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services to her question at the previous meeting of Council on the number of County Council employees who had a learning disability. She requested clearer information on this issue. Responding, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services noted that this was a complex matter. He agreed to ask the Director of Human Resources to speak to Councillor Hughes personally.
- [Councillor Jenkins referred to a recent meeting of representatives of the County Council, Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council to discuss improvements to measures for cyclists on Kings Hedges and adjoining roads. At the meeting, it had been recognised that a number of shortcomings in the implementation of these measures had led to increased costs to the County Council. Councillor Jenkins asked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services to confirm what these increased costs had been. He also asked the Cabinet Member to assist in ensuring the works were completed as soon as possible. The Cabinet Member agreed to provide a written response on costs and confirmed that the scheme would be pursued as quickly as possible within the resources available.](#)

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

## **122. MOTIONS**

No motions had been submitted under Council Procedure Rule 10.

## **123. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES**

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

- Councillors Hunt, McCraith and Normington to be appointed to the pool from which Service Appeals Committee members are drawn.

Chairman: