

COUNTY COUNCIL: MINUTES

Date: Tuesday 17th October 2006
Time: 10.30 a.m. – 2.40 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, J Dutton, R Farrer, B Hardy, G F Harper, D Harty, G J Heathcock, W G M Hensley, S Higginson, P E Hughes, W Hunt, J L Huppert, C Hyams, J D Jenkins, S F Johnstone, E Kadić, A C Kent, S G M Kindersley, S J E King, S Lee, 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, J K Walters, J West, D White, K Wilkins, H Williams, M Williamson, L J Wilson and F H Yeulett

Apologies: Councillors S A Giles and N Harrison

102. MINUTES: 18th JULY 2006

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 18th July 2006 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

103. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Death of Councillor Eddy

The Chairman announced with sadness that Councillor Eddy had died on 3rd August 2006, following a short illness. Members observed a minute's silence in his memory.

New Councillor

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Criswell to his first meeting of the Council.

Awards and achievements

The Chairman led members in congratulating:

- All those involved in improving and expanding cycling facilities in the County. In a recent event organised by the Robert Gordon University of Aberdeen, the Council had won the cycling category award, sponsored by the Department of Transport.

- The Council's Library Design Team on winning the Landmark Libraries Atelier Award for the pioneering library building at Sackville House, Cambourne.

Think Pink campaign

The Chairman brought to members' attention the Think Pink campaign, a joint initiative between Cambridge's Park and Ride and Cancer Research UK to raise funds for the All Together campaign to fight breast cancer.

104. 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 and McCraith as members of South Cambridgeshire District Council (Minute 109, Reports of the Meetings of Cabinet held on 5th and 26th September 2006, various items)
- Councillor Huppert as a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, a landowner with potential interests (Minute 109, Report of the Meeting of Cabinet held on 26th September 2006, Item 1, Adoption of the Statement of Community Involvement for the Preparation and Revision of Forthcoming Minerals and Waste Development Documents and the Consideration of County Planning Applications, and Item 2, The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Plan – Preferred Options)
- Councillor J Reynolds as Chairman and Director of Renewables East (Minute 109, Report of the Meeting of Cabinet held on 26th September 2006, Item 3, Waste Private Finance Initiative Project)
- Councillor Curtis as a governor at Sir Harry Smith Community College in Wisbech (Minute 109, Report of the Meeting of Cabinet held on 26th September 2006, Item 6, Building Schools for the Future)
- Councillor Tuck as the Presiding Chairman of the Interim Executive Board of The Queen's School, Wisbech (Minute 109, Report of the Meeting of Cabinet held on 5th September 2006, Item 7, School Interim Executive Boards – Establishment of an Interim Executive Board at the Queen's School, Wisbech, and Minute 109, Report of the Meeting of Cabinet held on 26th September 2006, Item 10, The Queen's School, Wisbech)
- Councillor Downes as a governor of Brampton Infant School (Minute 109, Report of the Meeting of Cabinet held on 26th September 2006, Item 9, Primary Educational Provision in Brampton)
- Councillors Bates and Melton as Directors of Cambridgeshire Horizons (Minute 109, Report of the Meeting of Cabinet held on 26th September 2006, Item 14, Horizons Quality of Life Strategies)
- Councillor Bean as an employee of the Cambridgeshire Primary Care Trust and Councillor Johnstone as a Non-Executive Director of the Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (Minute 113, Motion).

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

- Councillor Lucas as Vice-Chairman of the Hinchingsbrooke Healthcare NHS Trust Board (Minute 113, Motion).

105. REPORT OF THE COUNTY RETURNING OFFICER

Members noted that Steve Criswell, a Conservative, had been elected in the by-election held on 12th October 2006 for the Earith and Somersham Electoral Division.

106. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

107. APPOINTMENT OF HONORARY ALDERMAN

It was proposed by the Chairman, Councillor Normington, seconded by the Vice-Chairman, Councillor Orgee and agreed unanimously

To confer the title of Honorary Alderman on the late County Councillor John Eddy.

All three Group Leaders paid tribute to Councillor Eddy and commended his considerable service to local government.

108. UPDATE TO COUNCIL CONSTITUTION

It was proposed by the Chairman, Councillor Normington and seconded by the Vice-Chairman, Councillor Orgee

To approve the revisions to the Council Constitution as set out in the appendix to the Council report.

Speaking as the Chairman of the Standards Committee, Councillor Orgee reported that the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 12th October 2006 had endorsed the proposal as set out in the appendix relating to the composition of a sub-committee to determine complaints against members for alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct.

On being put to the vote, the revisions were agreed unanimously.

109. REPORTS OF CABINET MEETINGS

Meeting held on 5th September 2006

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Walters, moved receipt of the report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 5th September 2006.

Key decisions for information

1) Overarching Policy for Gypsies and Travellers

Councillors Hughes and Sales both welcomed the Policy, saying that it was badly needed and long overdue. They emphasised the importance of implementing the Policy effectively to address social exclusion, and of involving partners fully in this work.

Responding, the Leader of the Council, Councillor Walters, noted that the Policy was an important first step towards coherent partnership working. Other authorities within Cambridgeshire would now be invited to sign up to the Policy and it would also be used as a basis for regional working.

2) Invest to Transform Proposals 2006/07

Councillor Ballard welcomed the success of the initiatives funded through the former Good Housekeeping Fund, especially highlighting the work done to make in-County provision for children in care with high levels of needs who had previously been placed out of County. However, he expressed concern that initiatives being supported through the Fund's successors, Invest to Save and now Invest to Transform, appeared to lack some of the original focus. He particularly expressed concern about using the Fund to put officers in post, and then deducting their cost in the following year; and expenditure on health service issues, which he suggested should be funded by other means.

Councillor Jenkins welcomed the proposed projects but emphasised the need for sufficient officer resources within the Council to ensure that third-party contracts were managed effectively. He drew attention to the recent difficulties encountered in road construction at Arbury Camps.

Responding, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Councillor Powley, explained that the nature of the initiatives being funded was changing, to enable a broader range of services to benefit from different forms of investment. He emphasised that the expenditure on health services was not a loan to the Cambridgeshire PCT, but would enable better partnership working. The Cambridgeshire Care Partnership would monitor the use of this funding closely.

Other decisions

3) Decriminalised Parking Enforcement in Cambridgeshire

4) Risk Management Annual Review

5) Top 30 Performance Indicators (PIs) 2005/06 and Performance Monitoring for Quarter 1 of 2006/07

Councillor Huppert noted that the end of year report for 2005/06 showed that the Council had achieved only 62.5% of its targets. He urged the Council to aim to increase this performance for 2006/07. He also highlighted a number of key areas in which performance had not improved or had dropped, including performance at Key Stage 2 in

Maths, the educational performance of looked after children, and the stability of placements for looked after children. He also noted that in the first quarter of 2006/07, performance against eight targets in the top 30 had improved, but against seven had fallen. He highlighted concerns about the number of older people helped to live at home and the take-up of direct payments. He noted that the percentage of schools with an Ofsted designation was susceptible to changes affecting one or two schools.

Councillor Ballard drew attention to a number of areas of improvement as identified by the performance indicators, including reduced waiting times for care assessments for both older people and vulnerable children. However, he shared Councillor Huppert's concern about areas of poor performance, especially numbers of older people helped to live at home. He noted that Cambridgeshire's performance against this indicator was significantly below average and expressed concern that the situation had not improved with the creation of the Cambridgeshire Care Partnership, as had been the expectation. He also expressed concern that the reductions to the budget for older people's services in 2006/07, and specifically the review of care packages, did not appear to be proving effective.

The Lead Member for Environment, Waste and Business, Councillor Oliver, highlighted two areas of strong performance: the County's recycling rate, which was currently just above 51% and rising, and sickness absence of Council employees, which was lower than the private sector average. She asked all officers who had contributed to these achievements to be congratulated.

Responding to the speakers, the Leader of the Council, Councillor Walters, noted that ambitious targets had been set and that reaching 62.5% of these was a considerable achievement. On the specific targets mentioned, he noted that only one school had received a new Ofsted designation, the Queen's School in Wisbech, where significant action was now being taken; and performance on direct payments was improving strongly and expected to reach the target at the end of 2006/07. On older people helped to live at home, improving performance was a priority and Cambridgeshire was talking to other local authorities about ways of achieving this. It was also possible that local authorities' approaches to measuring performance were not consistent and this was being reviewed with the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

- 6) Safe Employment – Update on Bichard Recommendations
- 7) School Interim Executive Boards – Establishment of an Interim Executive Board at The Queen's School, Wisbech
- 8) Petition – 32 Bus Service Linking Cambridge and Saffron Walden

Meeting held on 26th September 2006

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Walters, moved receipt of the report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 26th September 2006.

Key decision for determination

- 1) Adoption of the Statement of Community Involvement for the Preparation and Revision of Forthcoming Minerals and Waste Development Documents and the Consideration of County Planning Applications

It was moved by the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services, Councillor Reynolds, seconded by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Walters, and agreed unanimously

To approve the 'Submission' Statement of Community Involvement, as amended in line with the inspector's recommendations.

Key decisions for information

- 2) The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Plan – Preferred Options
- 3) Waste Private Finance Initiative (PFI) Project

Councillor Reid congratulated all members and officers involved in the Waste PFI on a professional procedure and satisfactory outcome to date. He welcomed the avoidance of bulk incineration and the adoption of a treatment process that would be economical, environmentally sound and flexible to meet possible future changes. He encouraged the Council to pursue the option of a treatment plant with zero carbon emissions, powered by captured methane and/or wind turbines.

Councillor Huppert also commended the procedure that had been followed in developing this PFI, noting particularly the full involvement of the Environment and Community Services Scrutiny Committee, which had made information publicly available.

Councillor Hughes reported that the Labour Group also welcomed the decision to award the contract to Donarbon.

- 4) Voice and Data Convergence Project – Alteration to Capital Proposal Approved in the 2006/07 Budget

Councillor Moss-Eccardt sought clarification of the relationship between the voice and data convergence project and the commitment through the Building Schools for the Future initiative to the procurement of an integrated schools' Information and Communications Technology (ICT) service.

Councillor Broadway asked why the capital costs of the project had doubled, from £750,000 to £1,569,000.

Councillor Sales reported that the Labour Group supported this project, which should be a cost-effective way of meeting challenges.

Responding to the speakers, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Councillor Powley, explained that the figure of £750,000 had

been a notional figure, which had been updated now that more detailed costings had been prepared. He emphasised that the Council's existing system would shortly become obsolete, meaning that doing nothing was not an option. The new technology would lead to financial savings and would also support flexible working, as being pursued through the Office Accommodation Strategy. He confirmed that the updated telecommunications technology would be available to schools in future.

- 5) St Ives Market Town Transport Strategy
- 6) Building Schools for the Future (BSF)

The decision of Cabinet on 26th September 2006 on the Building Schools for the Future initiative had been called in by sixteen members of the Labour and Liberal Democrat Groups. The call-in was due to be considered at a meeting of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee on 18th October 2006.

Members supporting the call-in raised the following issues:

- The call-in was a request for public scrutiny and not necessarily a rejection of the Cabinet's decision. The Labour and Liberal Democrat Groups welcomed investment in schools in Fenland to help improve educational attainment and had agreed that the BSF Readiness to Deliver statement be submitted to the Department for Education and Skills by their deadline of 13th October 2006, so that the process was not delayed.
- Members had asked for the call-in to be considered by the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee because of concerns about the affordability of BSF and in particular the use of a Private Finance Initiative (PFI). It was not yet clear who would pay charges, how costs would be contained or how risks would be managed. The extent to which the Council was now committed to BSF, or could withdraw in future when other options had been more fully examined, was also unclear.
- The current proposal related only to Fenland secondary and special schools and could bring £95 million of investment. The County had 31 secondary schools in total, meaning that total investment could be around £400 million. It was vital to give full consideration at an early stage to the implications of a project of this scale.
- Concern was expressed that central Government appeared to be micro-managing investment in the County's schools by including its District in different waves of the BSF programme. It was suggested that it would be preferable for Cambridgeshire to receive a Countywide allocation, which could then be used more effectively in conjunction with the Section 106 funding being generated in the south of the County.
- Issues relating to the use of PFI should be examined in detail, given negative experiences with some PFI projects elsewhere in the country. Members expressed concern that some PFI private sector

partners had refinanced contracts at lower interest rates once the more risky construction phase was over, thereby obtaining significant profit at the public sector's expense.

- It was expected to cost the Council £2-3 million to set up the scheme, necessitating a re-examination of capital programme priorities through the Medium Term Corporate Priority (MTCP) process. Concern was expressed that alternative means of investing in Fenland schools would not be explored in detail before a commitment was given to this expenditure, and that this funding would need to be found at a time when the Council would already be facing a large funding deficit.
- The operation and maintenance of rebuilt and/or refurbished schools would be managed through 25- or 30-year contracts, likely to be overseen by a Local Education Partnership. Members were concerned that this long-term arrangement would reduce flexibility and could significantly increase costs. It was not clear whether schools or the local authority would bear the risk if schools were unable to pay charges.
- Members emphasised the need fully to involve schools' head teachers and governors from the earliest stages of the project, so that they were clear how their schools could be affected.

Members opposing the call-in made the following comments:

- Investment in Fenland secondary schools should be welcomed, since this was one of the most deprived parts of the County and improved buildings would help to support the considerable progress already being made in improving educational attainment. The BSF initiative potentially offered £95 million to invest in Fenland; it was not clear how funding to this scale could be obtained from other sources.
- At this stage, Cambridgeshire had only expressed interest in the BSF initiative. The Council would be able to withdraw at a later stage if it wished to do so.
- The call-in was premature, since the information being requested was not yet available. More information on funding mechanisms and risk management would become available as the project developed and would be subject to public scrutiny.
- Detailed information was not yet available about the 25- or 30-year maintenance contracts. However, it was likely that these would include review clauses, to ensure that pricing remained competitive.

7) Secondary Educational Provision to Serve the North-West Fringe of Cambridge City

Councillor Moss-Eccardt noted that local residents were concerned that the Manor Community College might be under threat of closure, and asked whether this was the case.

Responding, the Lead Member for Children and Young People's Services Planning and Development, Councillor Pegram, reported that the Manor Community College was not currently being considered for closure. Neither Manor nor Chesterton Community Colleges would serve the new community being proposed.

Councillor Ballard noted that there appeared to be some confusion over the numbers of pupils and secondary places in the new development. He would be reserving his comments until the report on the wider review of Cambridge City catchments was published at the end of November.

8) Primary Educational Provision in Sawston

9) Primary Educational Provision in Brampton

Councillor Downes thanked Cabinet members and officers for their efficient and helpful approach to the recent review of primary educational provision in Brampton.

10) The Queen's Secondary School, Wisbech

Councillor Kent expressed serious concern at the failings of the Queen's School in Wisbech and welcomed the decisive actions now being taken to improve performance. She noted that many of the actions covered by the national Fresh Start programme would be implemented irrespective of whether the School received formal designation. She commented on the need for the consultation process to take into account the need for differing levels of detail for different groups of consultees. She emphasised the need to involve all political groups through the Service Development Groups in discussions about the future of the School. She also commented on the need for the new arrangements for the School to enable the local authority readily to intervene if necessary.

Responding, the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services, Councillor Johnstone, welcomed these comments. She agreed that the consultation process would need to be swift and effective and that the new arrangements for the School would have to ensure real accountability. She confirmed that there would be all-party involvement in discussions about these arrangements. Councillor Johnstone also commended the work already being done by the executive head teacher and the Interim Executive Board to begin to turn the School around.

11) Longstanton Bypass Side Roads Order

Other decisions

12) A605/B671 Elton Safety Scheme

13) Highways Operational Matters

Councillor Jenkins welcomed the introduction of a formal process to facilitate the implementation of privately funded highways features. He emphasised that the role of the County Council in this process should be to enable schemes to proceed as quickly as possible.

Responding, the Lead Member for Transport and Delivery, Councillor McGuire, also welcomed the process but noted that the County Council as Highways Authority retained responsibility to ensure that issues such as safety audits, the handling of any insurance claims and long-term maintenance costs were properly addressed. The formal process would ensure that this was done.

14) Horizons Quality of Life Strategies

Councillor Hughes reported that the Labour Group welcomed these Strategies. She commented that it would be important to recognise the diversity of developing communities to ensure social inclusion.

Councillor Reid particularly welcomed the Green Infrastructure Strategy, which would provide an excellent basis for future development.

15) Consultation Response on Trumpington Meadows Planning Applications

16) Post-Compulsory Education Discretionary Awards

Councillor Sales noted that discretionary awards were still needed to enable students to attend some colleges. He expressed regret that the Council was unable to offer discretionary awards and urged that the budget for these be reinstated when the Council's financial position permitted.

Responding, the Lead Member for Community Learning and Development and Adult Social Care noted that other sources of discretionary awards were available. He provided details of these to Councillor Sales.

17) Comprehensive Performance Assessment Direction of Travel Statement

18) Budget Monitoring 2006/07

A number of Opposition members made comments on the budget monitoring report:

- Expressed concern at the number of significant variations identified in the budget monitoring report.
- Expressed concern that the Council's current difficulties were due in greater part to systemic deficiencies in the budget-setting process, which had been based on figures rather than activity and had used inadequate data. Even if it was possible to achieve a balanced budget for 2006/07, this would be by making considerable use of non-recurrent funding. The situation faced in 2006/07 presented considerable challenges for the budget for 2007/08; a sustainable solution was essential.
- Noted that the main source of underspending was the debt charges budget, which was vulnerable to increases in interest rates.

- Noted that detailed recovery plans had been prepared for each Office. Councillor Huppert called for these to be made publicly available and also asked the Leader of the Council to provide a written response to the questions on these plans that he had submitted through the recent 'Ask Ian' initiative. The Leader of the Council agreed to do this.
- Emphasised the need for clearly expressed information, both in budget-monitoring and budget-setting papers. Members welcomed the opportunity that the Budget Advisory Panels would provide to members of all Groups to put forward their suggestions.
- Drew attention to a recent article in the Cambridge Evening News in which the Leader of the Council had appeared to suggest that services for immigrants and older people were responsible for pressures on the Council's resources. Members commented that many East European migrant workers were vital to the County's economy and did not place heavy demands on Council services. The numbers of asylum seekers entering the County were also reducing. Councillor Moss-Eccardt asked to be advised of how many immigrants it had been predicted would enter the County, how many were now entering and how much they were costing Council services. The Leader of the Council agreed to send a written response to these questions.
- Highlighted the particular problem faced by the Learning Disability Partnership, which had a statutory duty to provide services and faced a growing level of demand. This was partly due to advances in medical care keeping babies with severe disabilities alive, and partly because of ageing parents becoming unable to care for their adult learning disabled offspring, some of whom had not previously been known to Social Services.
- Highlighted particular impacts of in-year budget cuts that had been publicly stated, including the reduction of the Library Book Fund by £100,000 and savings of £500,000 in highways maintenance, which would include the freezing of some local highways improvement schemes. Savings of £1.3 million were proposed in Adult Social Care, partly by reviewing packages of care; it was suggested that greater contributions should be sought from the health service towards these costs.
- Suggested that consideration be given to increasing the Council's reserves, which at £5 million were a very small proportion of annual turnover. It was noted that this point had previously been identified by the Council's auditors. A greater level of reserves might mean that fewer in-year cuts to budgets were needed when spending proved to be higher than had been anticipated.

Responding to the speakers, Cabinet members made the following comments:

- Emphasised that Cambridgeshire was not unique in the financial difficulties it faced. Hampshire, an 'excellent' authority under the

Comprehensive Performance Assessment, had recently changed its eligibility criteria for older people's services to 'critical'. Cambridgeshire would continue to resist this move. It was essential to ensure that central Government was fully aware of the pressures that local authorities were under, and of the particular challenges that Cambridgeshire faced, so that fair recognition of this was made in the allocation of Government grant.

- Reiterated the Cabinet's intention of achieving a balanced budget at the end of 2006/07. Any overspends would result in further cuts to the budget for 2007/08, when it was known that the Council's financial position would already be very difficult.
- Invited Opposition groups through the forthcoming MTCP process to present detailed budget alternatives.
- Agreed that it would be desirable to operate with a higher level of reserves, but emphasised that increasing reserves at the present time would mean removing funding from front-line services.
- Noted that there were currently 100 unaccompanied child asylum seekers in the County. Care of these children was placing considerable pressure on fostering placements.
- Noted that even with the budget cut, the Library Book Fund was still £200,000 higher than it had been in the previous year. Investment in Libraries was continuing, with increases in opening times and improvements to technology and to the book stock.

110. WRITTEN QUESTIONS

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

- Councillor Heathcock had asked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services, Councillor J Reynolds, about disruption in Queen Edith's whilst Cambridge Water Company carried out maintenance work, and about communication with local members about such works. The response set out details of the works in Queen Edith's, the Council's monitoring of these works and the steps taken to keep affected residents and the local member informed.
- Councillor Huppert had asked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services about current and projected costs for the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway, the funding sources that would be used to meet these costs and the anticipated completion date for the scheme. The response set out the information requested.
- Councillors Bell and Higginson had asked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services about road gully cleaning in Ely and about staffing levels in Development Control for East Cambridgeshire. The response gave details of gully cleaning activity in recent years and explained staffing arrangements in Development Control, including cover for East Cambridgeshire.

- Councillor Bell had asked the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Councillor Powley, for details of the Council's expenditure in 2005/06 on contractors and on consultants. The response explained that, in accordance with the Best Value Accounting Code of Practice, the Council's coding for analysing expenditure did not differentiate between expenditure on contractors and on consultants. However, drawing on information available from the Observatory and from the general ledger, a breakdown of expenditure on these two categories was provided.

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

111. ORAL QUESTIONS

Five oral questions were asked under Council Procedure Rule 9:

- [Councillor Hughes drew attention to the recent member-led review of opportunities for young people with learning disabilities and asked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services, Councillor Reynolds, how many people with learning disabilities the County Council employed. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services agreed to provide a written response.](#)
- [Councillor Moss-Eccardt noted that the Cambridge Environment and Traffic Management Area Joint Committee had been advised the previous day that the guide-wheels of guided buses would not be compatible with raised kerbs currently provided at bus stops. He asked to be advised how many bus stops would be affected and how much it would cost to remove the raised kerbs. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services agreed to provide a written response.](#)
- [Councillor Batchelor congratulated members and officers on their recent work to introduce a satisfactory scheme for concessionary bus fares. He asked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services to advise of current and predicted costs of the scheme to the County Council and to bus operators. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services agreed to provide a written response, noting that some of this information could be commercially sensitive.](#)
- Following his oral question at the last meeting of Council, Councillor Downes asked the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services, Councillor Johnstone, how the Council had responded to the Department of Health's consultation on raising the statutory age for tobacco sales. The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services reported that this had been discussed at the Learning Service Development Group and with officers in Environment and Community Services. The Council had agreed to support an increase in the statutory age from 16 to 18, and the same enforcement measures as were currently in place for alcohol sales. The Council had also supported positive licensing measures as the most effective means of protecting the health of the community, but had agreed that negative licensing measures would be better than none at all. Councillor Downes also asked how the Council's response would be publicised. Councillor Johnstone said that she would make available the minute of the meeting of the Learning Service Development Group.

- Councillor Jenkins welcomed the proposed relocation of the Cowley Road Park and Ride site, but expressed concern that the new scheme would be rushed and underfunded. He particularly asked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services about the budget for land purchase. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services reminded members that Growth Area Delivery Grant of £3 million was available for this scheme, which would need to be spent by 31st March 2008. There had been widespread consultation and officers were now negotiating the details of the land purchase. Councillor Jenkins also sought assurance that the new scheme would ensure there was no inappropriate use of Butt Lane by HCVs or other users of the Park and Ride site. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services noted that this had been covered in the consultation.

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

112. QUESTIONS ON POLICE AND FIRE AUTHORITY ISSUES

Police Authority

There were no questions on the Police Authority.

Fire Authority

Councillor Moss-Eccardt asked about progress in implementing the new radio control scheme for the Fire Service, Firelink. The Chairman of the Fire Authority, Councillor McGuire, reported that this would be installed in the new regional control centres. Good progress was being made towards the new control centre for the East of England, which would be located in Waterbeach, and it was expected to open in 2010.

113. MOTIONS

One motion had been submitted under Council Procedure Rule 10. With the agreement of the Council, an amended version of the motion, as set out below, was tabled and accepted for debate. The motion was proposed by Councillor Bates and seconded by Councillor Downes:

‘In light of the growing population of Cambridgeshire and of Huntingdon’s pivotal position in a growing road network, this Council opposes any reduction in health services at Hinchingbrooke Hospital and calls upon the Strategic Health Authority to recognise that Cambridgeshire is one of the fastest growing areas in the country and requires an increase in healthcare provision to meet future needs.

Furthermore, the Council demands that central Government honours its commitment to the NHS by providing sufficient funding to allow the Strategic Health Authority and Cambridgeshire Primary Care Trust to meet those needs. In so doing, it emphasises that, without the full range of services currently provided at the key location of Hinchingbrooke, including specifically an Accident and Emergency Unit, the added burden of travelling for patients, their relatives and friends, the increased risk to life and extra damage to the environment would be totally unacceptable.

This Council also urges Cambridgeshire residents to support Member of Parliament for the Huntingdon, North West and North East Cambridgeshire constituencies in petitioning on this crucial issue and to lobby the Strategic Health Authority to continue to provide full services at Hinchingsbrooke for the people of Huntingdonshire and beyond.'

Members speaking in support of the motion made the following points:

- Emphasised the need for adequate healthcare services to meet the rapidly growing population of the Cambridge sub-region. A report recently commissioned from the Health Forum by Cambridgeshire Horizons had identified the need for sufficient capacity in health and social care provision to meet the needs of both an expanding and an ageing population. The Health Forum report had also identified the need for adequate provision in the secondary care sector for day care treatment, elective surgery and emergency care. Members expressed serious concern that if services at Hinchingsbrooke were to close, other facilities would not have sufficient capacity to cope.
- Noted that if services at Hinchingsbrooke were closed, many Huntingdonshire residents would have to travel to Addenbrooke's. This would increase traffic congestion, carbon emissions and the risk of accidents on the A14. It would also be harder for relatives and friends to visit people in hospital, when visits played an important role in promoting recovery.
- Expressed concern that closure of services at Hinchingsbrooke would also affect residents of Fenland, many of whom currently used the Hospital. Significant health inequalities had already been identified for residents of Fenland and these were likely to be further exacerbated if services at the Hospital were to close, especially as the population of this District was also expanding rapidly.
- Expressed concern that the Maternity Unit had specifically been highlighted for closure.
- Commented that reductions to services at Hinchingsbrooke would have significant implications for primary care provision.
- Expressed concern that no timetable or terms of reference were yet available for the review of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital being carried out by the Strategic Health Authority. Members emphasised that the future of the Hospital should be reviewed within a national context, with central Government working with the Strategic Health Authority and the Cambridgeshire PCT to ensure adequate funding for the NHS in Cambridgeshire and beyond.
- Highlighted the strength of public support for the retention of full services at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital, as evidenced by recent marches and petitions.

There were no speakers against the motion.

On being put to the vote, the motion was agreed unanimously. [Councillor Johnstone abstained.]

114. 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:

- Councillor Smith to be appointed as a member of the Standards Committee
- Councillor Smith to replace Councillor Turner as a substitute member of the Environment and Community Services Scrutiny Committee
- Councillors Douglas and Kindersley to be appointed as substitute members of the Environment and Community Services Scrutiny Committee
- Councillors Reid and White to be appointed as substitute members of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee
- Councillor Broadway to be appointed as a substitute member of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee.

Chairman: