

## **COUNTY COUNCIL: MINUTES**

**Date:** Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2008

**Time:** 10.30 a.m. – 2.55 p.m.

**Place:** Shire Hall, Cambridge

**Present:** Councillor A G Orgee (Chairman)

Councillors D Baldwin, C M Ballard, J Batchelor, I C Bates, N Bell, B Boddington, M Bradney, J Broadway, P Brown, T Butcher, C Carter, K Churchill, S Criswell, M Curtis, P J Downes, S A Giles, G Griffiths, G F Harper, D Harty, P E Hughes, W Hunt, C Hyams, J D Jenkins, S F Johnstone, E Kadić, 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, S B Normington, M K Ogden, L J Oliver, D R Pegram, J A Powley, P Read, A A Reid, J E Reynolds, P Sales, M Shuter, L Sims, M Smith, T Stone, J M Tuck, J K Walters, J West, K Wilkins, H Williams, M Williamson, L J Wilson and F H Yeulett

**Apologies:** Councillors B Bean, A Douglas, J Dutton, R Farrer, N Harrison, G J Heathcock, S Higginson, P Humphrey, J Huppert, K Reynolds, R Turner and D White

### **215. MINUTES: 19<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2008**

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **216. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### Death of former Councillor

The Chairman reported with sadness the death of former Councillor Jane Brookes. Mrs Brookes had first been elected to the Council as local member for Trumpington in 1975 and had served as Chairman of the Council from 1989 to 1991. Councillors J Reynolds and Kent paid tribute to Mrs Brookes and described some of her achievements during her time as a Councillor. Members stood to observe a minute's silence in her memory.

#### Retirement of Highways Divisional Maintenance Engineer

The Chairman reported that David Groom, the East Cambridgeshire Highways Divisional Maintenance Engineer, was retiring after 38 years of service. He and Councillor Powley led members in thanking Mr Groom for all of his efforts and wishing him well for his retirement.

#### Awards and achievements

The Chairman led members in offering congratulations to all who had contributed to the following achievements:

- The County's retention of the Investors in People award for a further three years
- The recognition of the SmartLIFE project as a 'RegioStar', an accolade given by the European Commission to the top 20 projects in Europe
- The inclusion of the County Council's guidance on community cohesion on the website of the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)
- The request from the DCSF to the County's Traveller Education team to manage a project to assemble and publish a photo history archive of the first Gypsy Roma Traveller History month
- The green 'RAG' rating secured by the Personal, Social and Health Education Service for progress in achieving its milestones in relation to the Healthy Schools initiative
- Cambridgeshire's selection as one of a small number of local authorities to work with the National College of School Leadership on a project looking at new models of school leadership
- Cambridgeshire's representation at the 10 Downing Street launch of the National Year of Reading
- The Council's receipt of the Government Office award for Skills for Life, which recognises the development of a whole-organisation approach to skills for life and an entitlement for all staff in all roles throughout the Council
- The signing of the Waste Private Finance Initiative contract by the County Council and Donarbon
- The Huntingdonshire Learning Disability team being highly commended at the Local Government Chronicle awards.

## **217. 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 Johnstone as a Non-Executive Director of the Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (Minute 219, Report of the meeting of Cabinet held on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2008, Item 8, Cambridge Southern Fringe Section 106 Agreements)
- Councillor Williams as the Chairman of the Burwell House Management Group (Minute 219, Report of the meeting of Cabinet held on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2008, Item 13, Integration of Financial Arrangements for the Trading Units in the Office of Children and Young People's Services).

## 218. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

One member of the public attended the meeting to ask a question:

- Howard Griffiths reminded members that the aim of the Council's Sustainable School Travel Strategy and Safer Routes to School policy was to ensure that all children had access to sustainable and safe transport to school. He asked the Lead Member for Highways and Transport, Councillor McGuire, whether the decision to withdraw free home to school transport from September 2008 for 79 children travelling from Girton and Oakington to Impington was consistent with these policies. He noted that he had concerns about the safety of route assessment process, relating to accident records, speeding, width of pavements and provision of pedestrian crossings.

Responding, the Lead Member for Highways and Transport confirmed that the decision to withdraw free home to school transport along this route was in line with the Council's policies, which had been thoroughly reviewed during 2007. He reminded members that a new shared pedestrian/cycle route along this stretch had been completed during 2007 and that, following its completion, the route safety had been reassessed in line with Government guidance, leading to the decision to withdraw the free home to school transport. He noted that the Council operated an appeals process enabling parents who considered that free transport should continue to be provided for their children to appeal.

As a supplementary question, Mr Griffiths invited members to walk the route and scrutinise the assessment process and the route's safety prior to the forthcoming appeal. He restated his view that the assessment had been flawed and that the decision to withdraw free home to school transport should be rescinded. Responding, the Lead Member for Highways and Transport commented that it was for Scrutiny members to decide whether to review this issue. He reiterated that there was no evidence that the route had not been properly assessed.

A transcript of the question and response is available from Democratic Services.

## 219. REPORT OF THE CABINET

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Walters, moved receipt of the report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2008.

### **Meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2008**

#### Key decisions for information

- 1) Extension of School Age Range: Thomas Clarkson Community College, Wisbech, and Cromwell Community College, Chatteris

Councillors Melton, Read, Downes, Hughes and Kent welcomed the decision to extend the age range at both Community Colleges, to enable them to offer sixth form provision, as this would enable young people in Fenland to benefit from increased choice and diversity post-16.

Councillor Melton commented that the decision was particularly welcome given the current population growth in Chatteris and the surrounding villages and would mean that young people did not have to travel to the south of the County each day if they wished to continue their education.

Councillor Downes commented that continuity of education provision was beneficial for young people as it helped them to avoid disruptive transitions. However, he emphasised that the sixth forms would need to be well managed and appropriately integrated with the rest of the school.

Councillor Hughes welcomed the new provision, as it would help to change the assumption of some young people in these parts of the County that education ceased at 16, and instead show them the value of lifelong learning.

Responding, the Lead Member for Service Infrastructure, Councillor Harty, welcomed members' comments and noted that the age range extensions would now be taken forward partly through the Building Schools for the Future programme and partly with additional funding for new, purpose-built facilities.

## 2) Single Equality Strategy

Councillor Hughes welcomed the principle of a Single Equality Strategy to recognise the different facets of equality, but expressed disappointment in the document as drafted. She commented that in her view it lacked clear actions and adequate resources to make a significant difference internally to the Council and externally to the wider community.

Councillor Ballard also expressed concern that there was no evidence of how the ambitions set out in the Strategy would be achieved. He expressed disappointment that there was no reference in the section on age to active retirement, or in the section on disability of employment for people with learning disabilities, even though these were both issues that the County Council should be actively pursuing.

Responding, the former Lead Member for Communities, Councillor Lucas, commented that the Council was making significant progress in developing the equality agenda and recognising diverse needs. He gave examples of the support group for staff and members with disabilities, and of the work being done through the Office Accommodation Strategy to ensure that the needs of employees with disabilities were being met.

## 3) Building Schools for the Future (BSF): Outline Business Case and Procurement

Councillor Ballard commented that the BSF outline business case for schools in Fenland had been well prepared and appeared affordable to the Council. However, he noted that until contracts had been finalised, the full extent of the risk to be borne by the Council would remain uncertain. He also expressed his continuing concern that schools in the BSF programme would have their devolved formula capital grant halved, meaning that they would have to bear significantly increased costs themselves for repairs and maintenance. The Government had now

confirmed that this policy would be applied to BSF schools nationally, not only those in Cambridgeshire.

Councillor Kent also welcomed the outline business case but drew attention to the continuing implications for the Council in terms of Section 106 negotiations with developers and the Council's own capital programme. There would also be significant risks relating to contract length and terms and performance management.

Councillors Broadway and Kent emphasised the importance of building high quality, sustainable school buildings. This was of particular concern given the Government's stated aim to make all schools carbon neutral by 2016, and the tension between the BSF requirement to build to the BREEAM 'excellent' standard, as compared to the BREEAM 'very good' standard that formed the basis of Section 106 negotiations. Councillor Broadway also drew attention to the need to allow enough time for fully detailed planning proposals to be prepared for Development Control Committee, so that members did not have to defer decisions on applications pending receipt of further information.

Councillor Reid expressed concern about the proposed terms of the 15-year contract with a private sector partner through a Local Education Partnership (LEP). The Government's guidance recommended that only one break clause be included, at ten years. Councillor Reid expressed concern that this would be a very long period to be tied to a single exclusive supplier, especially given that £100 million was likely to be spent through the LEP in the first ten years alone. He recommended that a break clause should be included after five years, not only to give the Council the opportunity to terminate, should this be required, but also to provide a greater incentive to the private sector partner to perform strongly so that the contract continued.

Councillor Hughes welcomed the investment in school buildings, emphasising that the BSF programme provided an opportunity to be creative and innovative, creating positive learning environments that were of value not only to young people but also to others in the surrounding community.

Responding, the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services, Councillor Tuck, agreed that the main aim of BSF was to provide schools of which young people and the community could be proud. She noted that risk was being monitored constantly, including at regular meetings of the BSF Programme Board. She reminded members that Partnership for Schools had conducted a peer review of Cambridgeshire's outline business case and were happy for it to proceed to the next stage; they had also commended Cambridgeshire for being the most advanced local authority in Wave 4 of the BSF programme.

The Lead Member for Service Infrastructure, Councillor Harty, acknowledged that there were risks inherent in the programme but commented that the anticipated costs to the Council for the Fenland schools, £11.5 million over 25 years, were not that great given the benefits that would ensue. He agreed that the change to the devolved formula capital grant would require a changed approach to budgeting by

schools in the programme. This would be thoroughly reviewed, as would matters relating to sustainable design and the implications for Section 106 negotiations. Responding to Councillor Reid, the Lead Member for Service Infrastructure agreed to give further consideration to the Government's template for the contract with the private sector LEP partner.

4) Primary Education in Ely: Planning for the Future

Councillors Read and Bell both welcomed the proposals to increase primary education provision in Ely, to meet the needs of the growing population. Both members emphasised the need to plan in advance for growth, to enable all children to attend their catchment school and to avoid the need for stop-gap measures such as mobile classrooms.

Responding, the Lead Member for Service Infrastructure, Councillor Harty, confirmed that a phased expansion was planned for the Lantern School in Ely, ultimately to a 420-place school. An action plan was being developed for the amendment of the School's catchment area and the building works, which would be complete by September 2009. Local members would be involved in all discussions and a further report would be brought to members in September 2008.

5) Property Issues

Councillor Broadway noted the proposal to sell two parcels of County Council land adjacent to the A412 that had previously been held in reserve for the construction of the Fordham bypass. Now that the bypass had been constructed on an alternative line, this land was no longer required. Councillor Broadway reported that she welcomed the bypass but would have preferred the alignment originally discussed. The alignment now in use had meant the construction of an additional roundabout and was also having the unforeseen effect of an increase in the levels of traffic cutting through Snailwell, an option that had not previously been available.

6) Options for the Management of the Guided Busway

A number of members expressed concern at the Cabinet's decision to include the bus operators as members of the management committee for the Guided Busway.

- Councillor Jenkins asked who had taken the decision that the Busway would be managed by a management committee, and who had been consulted. He suggested that this decision should be carefully scrutinised.
- Councillor Stone and others suggested that it would be more appropriate for the County Council, given its responsibility for the maintenance of the Busway, to set the access charges, and for the bus operators to set the fares.
- Councillor Moss-Eccardt expressed concern that if bus operators were members of the management committee, it would be harder to

penalise them for any poor performance. He also asked who the other stakeholders also sitting on the management committee might be. He expressed concern that it was not clear how Councillors and local residents would be represented.

- Councillor Reid suggested that it would be useful to have an advisory group at which issues such as access charges and fares were discussed with the bus operators, but he opposed their membership of the actual management committee.

Councillor King challenged these views, proposing that it would be essential to include the bus operators on the management committee, since their contributions would be essential to the Guided Busway's success.

Councillor Moss-Eccardt asked whether the Council was still considering making the Busway a charitable trust, to avoid having pay business rates.

Councillor Downes asked who would be responsible for deciding where the buses stopped after they came off the Busway in Huntingdonshire, between St Ives and Hinchbrook.

[Responding, the Lead Member for Highways and Transport, Councillor McGuire, confirmed that the purpose of the access charges would be to cover operational and maintenance costs. The County Council would retain control as the operator of the Busway, but it made sense to involve the bus operators fully in discussions. Other stakeholders who might be invited to join the management committee included organisations such as Addenbrooke's Hospital. The Lead Member for Highways and Transport noted that the proposal for a management committee had been included in the Cabinet report. He reported that the Busway's liability for business rates was still being discussed. He agreed to investigate the issue of bus stops in Huntingdonshire and send a written response to Councillor Downes.](#)

## 7) New Scoring Model to Assess Subsidised Bus Services

Councillor Stone welcomed the new approach to assessing subsidised bus services, which would take better account of residents' needs. However, he commented that it was still unclear how communities would be engaged in discussion about alternative travel options.

Councillor Broadway welcomed the new methodology as an improvement but expressed disappointment that earlier and greater consideration had not been given to the needs of young and disabled people. She expressed concern that it might be too late to change the weightings in the assessment process at a later stage, if some services had already been withdrawn.

Councillor Moss-Eccardt asked why linear regression had been chosen as the comparator in the assessment methodology. He expressed concern that this could lead to strange results in some circumstances, for example if there were significant outliers.

Responding, the Lead Member for Highways and Transport, Councillor McGuire, reminded members that the new model had been developed as part of the wider passenger transport review, which had included much discussion of alternative travel options. He also noted that members had been invited to a workshop to discuss the methodology and expressed disappointment that only he had attended. The methodology would be kept under review and surveys would be carried out on subsidised bus services to gather more information about people's reasons for travelling.

8) Cambridge Southern Fringe Section 106 Agreements

Councillor Kent emphasised the importance of ensuring that community facilities were available as the first residents moved into new developments, to help stimulate community involvement and cohesion. She asked whether the County Council would consider making additional funding available to ensure that this was the case for the developments on the Cambridge Southern Fringe.

Councillor Hughes also commented that a focal point was needed to help develop a new community. She commended the efforts made at Arbury Park to open the new primary school even when there had still been only a very small number of pupils.

Councillor Read reported that the planning application for Northstowe had just been received. He expressed concern that it would take considerable negotiation with the developers to ensure that the trigger points for the provision of community facilities were appropriately placed.

Responding, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services, Councillor Pegram, agreed that it was essential to support new communities, but commented that this could be done by people as well as through buildings. He accepted that the trigger points for the Cambridge Southern Fringe Section 106 agreements were not ideally placed, but noted that all key partner agencies had been asked to ensure appropriate levels of staff support to the new communities from the outset.

Other decisions for information

9) Street Lighting Private Finance Initiative (PFI)

Councillor Reid noted that Cabinet had approved street lighting costs at their current level of £3.5 million a year for the life of the PFI contract. He asked whether consideration had been given to improving efficiency and reducing costs. He also noted that street lighting was responsible for approximately 20% of the Council's carbon emissions each year. The Council had recently agreed a target of reducing its total carbon emissions by 2% each year. However, he expressed concern that the options appraisal for replacement street lighting contained no evidence that carbon emissions had been considered and therefore asked for this to be reviewed. Lastly, he asked to be advised of the proposed length of the PFI contract term.



Councillor Broadway also expressed concern that the proposal to replace existing lighting with new white lighting was inconsistent with the Council's climate change objective and emerging Climate Change and Environment Strategy, since white lighting required more energy and resulted in higher carbon emissions. Councillor Broadway also suggested that it might be preferable not to adhere too rigidly to EU guidance on street lighting, which recommended a very high density of lights.

Responding, the Lead Member for Highways and Transport, Councillor McGuire, confirmed that the issues raised by members were being considered. He also noted that street lighting technology was constantly developing. The Council was not yet entering into a PFI contract; it was submitting its Outline Business Case, which would be subject to rigorous appraisal by Government.

10) Developing Cambridgeshire's Local Area Agreement (LAA) 2008

Councillor Batchelor reported the concerns of the Joint Accountability Committee (JAC) about the governance arrangements of Cambridgeshire Together, the LAA Board, particularly in terms of transparency and democratic accountability. These concerns had been raised at the JAC's first meeting but still not satisfactorily addressed at the most recent meeting, its third. Instead, members had been advised that a review was taking place and would report in September 2008. Councillor Batchelor asked Councillor Walters who the senior partner within the LAA was, and whether the County Council was required to accept Cambridgeshire Together's decisions.

Councillor Ballard echoed Councillor Batchelor's concerns about democratic accountability and commented on the challenge of involving the whole of the community, including hard to reach groups. He also questioned whether immediate partners to the LAA such as the District Councils were as well engaged as they should be. However, Councillor Ballard commended the considerable progress made to date to select 35 of the 198 indicators in the national set for inclusion in Cambridgeshire's LAA and commented on the benefit of having targets shared with partner agencies.

Councillor Broadway also commended the process that had been followed to select the 35 indicators, particularly in relation to community safety.

Councillor Bates asked whether the definitions of all 198 indicators in the national performance indicator set had yet been received from Government. He expressed concern that partners' performance would start to be monitored against these indicators very shortly, making it essential to know the context within which they were working.

Councillor Hughes reminded members that the Sustainable Community Strategy was intended to be a 'Cambridgeshire Vision', engendering a visionary society.

Councillor King noted concerns about Cambridgeshire Together's governance arrangements but reminded members that it would not be receiving area-based grant directly from Government, as had originally been envisaged. It was also likely to receive less reward grant in future than it had to date, meaning that its main role would be to persuade partners to work co-operatively together.

Responding, Councillor Walters acknowledged the JAC's concerns but emphasised that progress was being made. Government Office Eastern Region had commended Cambridgeshire's work on its new LAA. Answering the question from Councillor Bates, he confirmed that several indicator definitions had still not been received from Government and agreed that this was a matter of concern.

11) Agreeing Revised Council Values

Councillor Downes, Hughes and King questioned the rationale for dropping the Council's previous values of 'partnership' and 'customer focus'. They also questioned the merit of the acronym formed by the new values, 'ARIVEE'. Councillors Hughes and King also commented on the need to make the Cambridgeshire behaviours more accessible and readily applicable for employees and members.

Councillor Walters accepted these comments and invited suggestions for an improved acronym.

12) Comprehensive Performance Assessment Scorecard 2007

Councillor Jenkins suggested that the Council should show greater self-awareness of its situation. He reminded members that although the current scorecard retained the previous corporate assessment score of 4 out of 4, the most recent corporate assessment had given the Council a score of 2, which would be factored in in future. Performance in adult social care continued to be a limiting factor. The Council's Direction of Travel statement had found that the Council was improving 'adequately'. Even the Joint Area Review of children and young people's services, which had been very strong overall, had contained a score of 2 against two of the five outcomes.

Councillor Sales asked for this report to be used when considering the remit of the new post of Director of Adult Services, since it set out a clear statement of priorities.

Responding, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Councillor J Reynolds, and Councillor Melton commented that the Cabinet had put in place clear actions to address the issues raised. The Cabinet was determined to raise standards and to raise them quickly. The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services also reminded members that the Council's Use of Resources score had been excellent, 4 out of 4.

13) Integration of Financial Arrangements for the Trading Units in the Office of Children and Young People's Services

Several members welcomed the decision to integrate the financial reporting arrangements for the Children and Young People's Services trading units into the Office's wider budgetary control reports. However, members also expressed a number of concerns:

- Councillors King and Stone emphasised the need to address the trading units' historic deficits. Councillor Stone asked to be advised of the timescale for this.
- Councillor Ballard questioned whether it would be possible to avoid further deficits from accruing in future, given the strong competition from the private sector in some parts of the County, which meant that the customer base of some of the trading units was diminishing. He also emphasised the Council's responsibility to provide services for children in more remote parts of the County, which were less attractive to private sector providers.
- Councillor Kent asked for the School Library Service to be reviewed in the same way as the Catering Service and the Cambridgeshire Instrumental Music Agency (CIMA).
- Councillors Williams and Hyams drew attention to the services' limited scope to improve their situation, given their educational and statutory responsibilities. However, they accepted that integration would help the services to introduce cultural change.

Councillor Hughes spoke of the positive influence of music on young people's lives and commended the very high standard of accomplishment demonstrated in the recent CIMA concerts.

Councillor Williamson reported that to date, the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee had been considering the trading units' financial position; the Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee would now be taking on responsibility for monitoring their business plans.

Responding, the Leader of the Council, Councillor Walters, advised that, based on the experience of previous years, he accepted that it was not realistic to expect these units to run at profit. The Council had some social responsibility to deliver the services they provided and it was for this reason that the units were being transferred to the Council's base budget.

The Lead Member for Universal Services, Councillor Curtis, reported that proposals to address the trading units' historic deficits would be included in the first budgetary control report of the new financial year. He endorsed members' comments about the positive value of the services provided by the units and emphasised that every effort would be made to run them as efficiently and as effectively as possible.

14) East of England Development Agency Draft Corporate Plan 2008-11: Cambridgeshire County Council's Response

15) Shared Services Programme Update

Councillor West thanked officers for their hard work to support this programme and expressed hope that a satisfactory private sector partner would be found.

16) Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee's Member-Led Review of the Adult Social Care Information System

Councillor Griffiths welcomed this report as a positive example of what a Scrutiny member-led review could achieve. She also welcomed Cabinet's acceptance of all of the recommendations and expressed hope that they would now be taken forward positively.

Councillor Jenkins also welcomed the review, but asked the Lead Member for Enhanced Services, Councillor Yeulett, why it had been found that £300,000 available for system improvements over the past three years had not been used.

Responding, the Lead Member for Enhanced Services thanked members for their review and confirmed that all recommendations would now be taken forward.

Monitoring reports

17) Budget Monitoring Report for December 2007

Councillor Stone asked the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Councillor J Reynolds, whether the accumulated deficits for the Children and Young People's Services trading units would now appear in that Office's budgetary control reports. He also asked what was expected to happen to the Council's trading unit earmarked reserves.

Responding, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services reported that the first budgetary control report of the new financial year would address these issues.

18) Performance Monitoring for Quarter 3

Councillor Jenkins questioned whether the new style of reporting performance monitoring to Cabinet provided Cabinet members with sufficient detail. He also expressed concern that a key element of the balanced scorecard, 'Learning and growth', included only two performance indicators, against one of which performance was scored as red and falling, although the second, retention of corporate Investors in People accreditation, had been achieved, which was to be commended. There were also a number of important indicators scoring red and amber under the 'Organisational health' section.

Councillor Hughes particularly highlighted staff sickness absence, for which the target was not being met. She emphasised the importance of effective occupational health and support for staff, especially those working in potentially stressful front-line services.

Responding, the Cabinet's special adviser on performance management, Councillor Bradney, explained that more detailed figures were available but that the new reporting style was especially useful in identifying trends. On sickness absence, he reminded members that the target set had been very ambitious. In addition, 46% of absence was due to long-term sickness, and this needed to be recognised and managed accordingly.

## **220. WRITTEN QUESTIONS**

One written question had been submitted under Council Procedure Rule 9:

- Councillor Harrison had noted that the Council's Highways contract ran for ten years, with possible breaks at five and seven years. She had asked the Lead Member for Highways and Transport, Councillor McGuire, why the break clause had been included in the contract. The response from the Lead Member for Highways and Transport explained that it was standard practice to include formal review points in a contract of this length, but that this did not remove the ability of either party to terminate the contract at another time in accordance with the appropriate clauses.

## **221. ORAL QUESTIONS**

Six oral questions were asked under Council Procedure Rule 9:

- Councillor Downes drew attention to recent media coverage of examples nationally of malpractice in the school admissions process. He sought assurance from the Lead Member for Service Infrastructure, Councillor Harty, that there was no evidence of malpractice in Cambridgeshire. Responding, the Lead Member for Service Infrastructure commented that he was not aware of any major concerns, but if these should arise, they would be investigated thoroughly. He reminded members that Cambridgeshire had been able to provide first choice of school for 91% of pupils for September 2008, well above the national average.
- Councillor Bell reported that East Cambridgeshire District Council had recently received a substantial grant from Cambridgeshire Horizons to carry out a technical appraisal for an Ely southern bypass. He asked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services, Councillor Pegram, whether he considered this to be appropriate, given that funding for a bypass was unlikely to be available for a number of years and that the County Council had already carried out similar work. He also asked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services whether, in his opinion, the grant would be better put towards cheaper ameliorative measures at the railway crossing, or a technical study of the possibility of reopening Soham railway station. Responding, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services commented that without a technical appraisal, it would not be possible for any scheme to move forward. However, he agreed to discuss with Cambridgeshire Horizons and East Cambridgeshire District Council whether this would be the most effective use of the grant funding at the present time.

- Councillor Sales asked the Lead Member for Highways and Transport, Councillor McGuire, about the process for getting dangerous potholes in his division repaired. Responding, the Lead Member for Highways and Transport explained that the Council had a policy for potholes relating to their size and location, according to which they were prioritised for repair. The policy had recently been discussed at the Highways and Transport Policy Development Group as part of the Council's Highways Policies and Standards, and it had been agreed that this document would now be made publicly available.
- [Councillor Broadway reminded members that in a survey at Christmas, 1,500 streetlights around the County had been found not to be working. She asked the Lead Member for Highways and Transport for an update on the current figure. The Lead Member for Highways and Transport agreed to send a written response.](#)
- Councillor Jenkins asked the Lead Member for Highways and Transport whether he agreed that the evidence on which the decision to withdraw free home to school transport from Oakington and Girton to Impington had been based was faulty and that the decision should be withdrawn. The Lead Member for Highways and Transport responded that he did not. As a supplementary question, Councillor Jenkins suggested that the accident record for the route had not been considered and that path widths had not been measured properly. He asked the Lead Member for Highways and Transport to reconsider the decision for this route and for another one from Rampton. Responding, the Lead Member for Highways and Transport commented that there was no evidence in relation to Oakington and Girton that policy had not been properly followed. He agreed to check the separate matter relating to Rampton.
- Councillor Stone expressed concern about the process for road adoptions and described the recent experience of residents of a new road in Fowlmere, who had been told by the developers that the road would be adopted but had subsequently not found this to be the case. Councillor Stone asked the Lead Member for Highways and Transport to work with the District Councils to ensure that all developers were required to state in their planning applications whether they would be submitting new roads for adoption and to what timescale. Responding, the Lead Member for Highways and Transport agreed that the current adoption process was unsatisfactory and reported that discussions were already taking place as to how it might be improved.

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

## **222. QUESTIONS ON POLICE AND FIRE AUTHORITY ISSUES**

Members were invited to ask questions and comment on issues relating to the Cambridgeshire Police Authority and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority.

### Report of the Chairman of the Cambridgeshire Police Authority

Councillor King reported that he had been advised at a recent meeting that the cost to Cambridgeshire Constabulary of providing services to new dwellings in

the County would be approximately £360 per household. He asked whether the Constabulary was now seeking this increase in funding for every new dwelling being built in the County, or only those clustered in the main growth areas.

Responding, the Chairman of the Police Authority, Councillor Walters, commented that he had not been advised of this particular figure. He confirmed that the Constabulary and the Police Authority were continuing to use every possible means to press the Home Office for increased funding to meet growth pressures, but with limited success to date.

As a supplementary question, Councillor King asked whether the £360 cost per household could be included in Section 106 negotiations with developers of new housing. The Chairman of the Police Authority confirmed that the Constabulary was pursuing all possible income from Section 106 contributions, but reminded members that for Section 106 requests to be valid, it had to be possible to demonstrate that the need had arisen directly from the construction of the additional houses.

Councillor Hunt asked whether the construction of an Ely southern bypass would help the Constabulary to deliver its services more efficiently. The Chairman of the Police Authority reported that, as far as he was aware, this had not yet been discussed. Councillor Broadway, another member of the Police Authority, reminded members that the Police headquarters in Ely were situated in the town centre, meaning that the construction of a bypass might bring limited direct benefit.

Councillor Bates drew attention to the high percentage increases in the precepts being set by some other Police Authorities nationally, including 78.9% in Lincolnshire, 15.4% in Leicestershire and 9.4% in Surrey. He reminded members that despite the significant pressures faced in Cambridgeshire, it had been agreed locally to heed the Government's warnings about capping and set only a 5% increase. He expressed the hope that the Government would now react to the Authorities setting the significantly higher increases, to show that a consistent approach was being applied. The Chairman of the Police Authority endorsed these comments.

Councillor Hyams paid tribute to the hard work and dedication of the Police Community Support Officers in his division and elsewhere in the County. The Chairman of the Police Authority echoed his comment, noting that Police Community Support Officers fulfilled a valuable and cost-effective role, aiding efficient liaison between the community and warranted officers.

Councillor Batchelor noted that a number of Police houses in Linton were being sold and asked whether the Police Authority was following an active policy of disposing of its houses. The Chairman of the Police Authority noted that many officers were now choosing to live in open-market housing rather than in Police houses and confirmed that properties were therefore being sold if no future need for them was anticipated.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Batchelor asked whether it might be possible to make surplus properties available as affordable housing. The Chairman of the Police Authority noted that this was not an option, as the Authority's duty was to obtain best value for its assets.

## Report of the Chairman of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority

Councillor Williams paid tribute to Tony Raine, the watch manager at March Fire Station, who had recently won a national award for courage at the Spirit of Fire Awards. Following a road accident Mr Raine had suffered permanent paralysis in his left leg, but with the support of his family and colleagues had been able to return to work for the Fire and Rescue Service.

Councillor Hunt asked whether the construction of an Ely southern bypass would help Fire and Rescue to deliver services more efficiently. The Chairman of the Fire Authority commented that he would welcome any enhancement to the road network that would enable the delivery of a faster response service.

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

### **223. MOTIONS**

No motions had been submitted under Council Procedure Rule 10.

### **224. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES AND OUTSIDE BODIES**

The Chairman reported that no appointments to Committees or outside bodies had been proposed.

Chairman: