

## **COUNTY COUNCIL: MINUTES**

**Date:** Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2006  
**Time:** 10.30 a.m. – 4.55 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, P Brown, T Butcher, C Carter, M Curtis, P J Downes, J Dutton, J A P Eddy, R Farrer, G Griffiths, B Hardy, G F Harper, N Harrison, 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, 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 Toomey, J M Tuck, R Turner, J K Walters, J West, K Wilkins, H Williams, L J Wilson and F H Yeulett

**Apologies:** Councillors J Broadway, S A Giles, S Lee and M Williamson

### **50. MINUTES: 13<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2005**

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2005 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **51. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### **Death of Former County Councillor**

The Chairman reported with sadness the death of former County Councillor and Honorary Alderman John Horrell. John Horrell had first been elected to local government in 1963 and had served on the former Huntingdon and Peterborough County Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council. He had served as both Chairman of Cambridgeshire County Council and Leader of its Conservative Group, and had been made an Honorary Alderman in 1997, in recognition of his contribution to public life. Members observed a minute's silence in his memory.

#### **Ely South and West By-Election**

The Chairman welcomed to his first meeting of Council Councillor Simon Higginson, a Liberal Democrat, who had won the Ely South and West by-election on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2006.

#### **Awards and Achievements**

The Chairman led members in congratulating:

- Jeremy Adams, one of the Council's Trading Standards officers, on his appointment as the national Lead Officer for Animal Health for the Trading Standards Institute
- All those whose work had led to the short-listing of Procure to Pay and Human Resources projects for Local Government Chronicle awards. The winners would be announced on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2006
- The Park and Ride service for receiving a Charter Mark for excellence in customer service for the third consecutive year
- Staff in Environment and Community Services, on Cambridgeshire's recognition as the top recycling County in England for 2004/05 and also as a top County for the quality of planning services delivered over the website.

## **52. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following members declared personal interests under Paragraph 8 of the Code of Conduct in relation to Minute 57, Report of the meetings of Cabinet held on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2005 and 24<sup>th</sup> January 2006, Item 1, County Council Budget 2006/07:

- Councillor Bean as an employee of East Cambridgeshire and Fenland Primary Care Trust
- Councillor Heathcock as a member of the Board of Age Concern Cambridgeshire
- Councillor Jenkins as a consultant working for an organisation that supplied care services to Environment and Community Services
- Councillor Williams as a member of Age Concern Cambridgeshire.

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 Batchelor as a member of South Cambridgeshire District Council (Minute 57, Report of the meetings of Cabinet held on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2005 and 24<sup>th</sup> January 2006, Item 2, Cambridgeshire's Local Area Agreement, and Minute 57, Report of the meeting of Cabinet held on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2006, Item 7, South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework – Consultation on the Submission Draft Documents)
- Councillor Huppert as a member of Cambridge Cycling Campaign (Minute 57, Report of the meetings of Cabinet held on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2005 and 24<sup>th</sup> January 2006, Item 11, Cambridge Southern Fringe Cycle Issues) and a fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge (whose land interests were relevant to a number of items on the agenda, particularly Minute 57, Report of the meeting of Cabinet held on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2006, Item 6, Cambridgeshire Guided Busway – Procurement)
- Councillor Kindersley as a member of South Cambridgeshire District Council and a member of Cambridgeshire Horizons (Minute 57, Report of the

meeting of Cabinet held on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2006, Item 7, South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework – Consultation on the Submission Draft Documents, and Item 9, Cambridgeshire Horizons Board – English Partnerships Membership)

- Councillor Melton as a member of Cambridgeshire Horizons (Minute 57, Report of the meeting of Cabinet held on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2006, Item 9, Cambridgeshire Horizons Board – English Partnerships Membership)
- Councillor Tuck as a Director on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Connexions Board (Minute 57, Report of the meeting of Cabinet held on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2006, Item 4, Incorporation of Connexions Cambridgeshire and Peterborough)

Councillor Johnstone declared a prejudicial interest under Paragraph 10 of the Code of Conduct in relation to Minute 57, Report of the meetings of Cabinet held on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2005 and 24<sup>th</sup> January 2006, Item 7, Addenbrooke's Access Road, as a Non-Executive Director of the Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. There was no discussion of this item.

### **53. REPORT OF THE COUNTY RETURNING OFFICER**

Members noted the election of Councillor Higginson, Liberal Democrat, following the by-election in Ely South and West electoral division on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2006.

### **54. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

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

### **55. REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL**

The following motion was proposed by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Walters, seconded by Councillor Carter, and agreed unanimously:

- (i) That the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel be received and the Panel thanked for its work on the review and on the report
- (ii) That the Panel's recommendations for increases in allowances as set out in paragraph 6.1(a) and Appendix 1 of the report be accepted
- (iii) That the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) payable to Opposition Group Leaders continue to be based on the number of members within the group, subject to a notional minimum of 10 members, and that the SRA set out in Appendix 1 be amended accordingly
- (iv) That the current arrangements for travel and subsistence allowances and access to the Local Government Pension Scheme remain unchanged [i.e. travel and subsistence allowances are linked to the rates paid to County Council officers and all Councillors shall be eligible to join the Pension Scheme]
- (v) That the Council notes that a number of other matters were raised with

the Panel, including the basis on which the SRA paid to Liberal Democrat Deputy Group Spokesmen is calculated. This will be considered as part of a wider review to be undertaken by the Panel in two years' time

- (vi) That Group Leaders give further consideration to the monitoring of member attendance.

Councillor Bates asked for a list to be published naming all Councillors in receipt of Special Responsibility Allowances. Councillor Harrison asked whether this information would be made available to the public via the Council's website. The Leader of the Council agreed to respond to both members.

## **56. COUNCIL CONSTITUTION – ACCESS TO INFORMATION PROCEDURE RULES**

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

To approve revisions to paragraphs 10 and 22.1 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules, as set out in the appendix to the report to Council, for implementation from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2006.

## **57. REPORTS OF CABINET MEETINGS**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Walters, moved receipt of the report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2005 and 24<sup>th</sup> January 2006.

### **Meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2005 and 24<sup>th</sup> January 2006**

#### Key decision for determination

- 1) County Council Budget 2006/07

The Leader of the Council drew attention to the following papers informing the budget debate:

- The report of the meetings of Cabinet on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2005 and 24<sup>th</sup> January 2006
- The Budget summary document circulated with the Council agenda
- The reports on the individual Office budgets circulated with the agenda
- The reports of the Council's four Scrutiny Committees on the budget proposals.

It was moved by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Walters, and seconded by the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Councillor Powley, that the Budget recommendations set out in the Cabinet report be adopted.

Councillors King, Bates, Harrison and Heathcock respectively moved the receipt of the reports of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee, the Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee, the Environment and Community Services Scrutiny Committee and the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee.

Members received a petition containing 231 signatures, which called on the County not to cut its support for bus services in Cambridgeshire when setting its 2006/07 budget. Dr Steve Harangozo of Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk Transport 2000 attended the meeting, spoke in support of the petition and answered members' questions.

Councillor Kindersley reported the receipt of a petition signed by 910 Gamlingay residents, asking the County Council to take on responsibility for 58 streetlights in their parish that South Cambridgeshire District Council would be switching off.

Councillor Walters opened the Budget debate on behalf of the Cabinet. Councillors Huppert and Ballard responded on behalf of the Liberal Democrat and Labour groups respectively.

In each of the three main service areas, Children and Young People's Services, Environment and Community Services and Corporate Services (including the Chief Executive's Department), a Cabinet Member spoke in support of the Cabinet's budget proposals: Councillor Pegram for Children and Young People's Services, Councillor Oliver for Environment and Community Services and Councillor Walters for Corporate Services. The Chairman of the relevant Scrutiny Committee then introduced the report from the Scrutiny Committee. A general debate on each service area followed. For each service, the lead Cabinet Member then summed up the debate: Councillor Johnstone for Children and Young People's Services, Councillor J Reynolds for Environment and Community Services and Councillor Powley for Corporate Services.

During the debate, members highlighted the following issues relating to specific service areas:

### **Children and Young People's Services**

- Emphasised the importance of ensuring equity of service provision across the County.
- Expressed concern that the proposed budget for Children and Young People's Services was based on substantial use of non-recurrent funding, which would not be available in future years. The budget also contained a number of other areas of high risk, including under-provision for inflation, a lack of flexibility to meet challenges, the expectation that savings would be forced out through restructuring, and the existing deficits on traded services. The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services, Councillor Johnstone, accepted that the Office faced considerable change and uncertainty over the coming year, but emphasised that in her view, the budget proposals were based on carefully calculated risk and would be workable.
- Noted that the schools budget was now being delivered separately through the Dedicated Schools Grant. This separation would make it very important for schools and the local authority to factor out funding for schools services.

- Emphasised the need for investment in early intervention and preventative services, particularly early years and youth services, since this would have a multiplier effect leading to significant savings for other services supporting children and young people later on. The additional £300,000 of funding for the Youth Service was welcomed. However, it was noted that under the Government's previous assessment mechanism, the Youth Service had been assessed as being underfunded by £2 million; and that the post-Ofsted action plan was still not fully funded. In addition, Fusion, an external evaluation which had focussed on Oxmoor in Huntingdon and had involved 400-500 young people, had demonstrated clearly that investment in preventative work with young people led to reduced criminal offending and reduced numbers of anti-social behaviour orders.

Members noted that the incorporation of Connexions into the County Council would assist with the development of the Youth Service.

### **Environment and Community Services**

- Noted the challenge of allocating £5 million of cuts across the six very diverse Directorates of Environment and Community Services: Adult Support Services; Highways and Access; Sustainable Infrastructure; Environment and Regulation; Community Learning and Development; and Customer Services.

### Adult Support Services

- Welcomed Cabinet's decision during the budget-setting process to put an additional £400,000 into the pooled budgets for older people's health and social care.
- Expressed concern at the proposal to make £3 million of savings to the budget for adult social care, including proposed savings of £1.135 million to packages of home care for older people. Concern was expressed that these savings were contrary to the Council's objective of improving support to people helped to live at home, and would place vulnerable individuals at considerable risk, especially if they were implemented too quickly. Concern was also expressed that the savings might not be achievable, or that they would take considerable time to deliver, since individuals' packages of care could not legally be reduced without a reassessment of their needs. It was suggested that it might be appropriate to provide a financial cushion, to enable these measures to be introduced more gradually and to ensure that the quality of services was maintained.
- Expressed concern at the proposal to reduce the budget for residential care by £411,000, in part because many vulnerable people in residential care would be unable to manage in their own homes, and in part because this saving did not appear to be reinvested in alternative home care.
- Expressed concern that good progress was being made with the integration of health and social care services for older people, with the

Council and the PCTs working together well to reduce pressure on acute services and address delayed transfers of care, and that reductions to the adult social care budget would undermine this progress.

- Expressed concern at the proposal to make savings of £50,000 on a contract for supported employment, as the contractor had not been delivering. Members emphasised that it was essential to help disadvantaged people to gain employment.
- Highlighted the recently agreed changes to mental health services in Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire. Concern was expressed that these changes would have financial implications for the County Council's social care budgets. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services, Councillor J Reynolds, noted that the direction of travel of the proposed changes was supported, but that the Council had serious concerns about the proposed speed of implementation. Members noted that allowance had been made for the impact of these changes in the Council's base budget.

#### Highways and Access

- Noted the suggestion from the Environment and Community Services Scrutiny Committee that, although the Council did not intend to contribute financially either to the construction or the operating costs of the Cambridgeshire guided busway, it might wish to contribute to publicity for its opening. The Deputy Chief Executive – Environment and Community Services had suggested that it might be possible to fund this at least in part from capital costs.
- Expressed concern at the proposed reductions to passenger transport subsidies, which were likely to impact on the County's most vulnerable and rurally isolated residents. Reductions to public transport were also contrary to the Council's environmental objectives. The Budget Advisory Panel and Scrutiny Committee had been advised that all services would come under review. The Lead Member for Sustainable Infrastructure now suggested that reductions to passenger transport subsidies would focus on evening and weekend services. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services, Councillor J Reynolds, noted that where possible, when subsidies to bus services were cut, consideration would be given to alternative support to rural communities, such as social car schemes.

#### Environment and Regulation

- Noted that Environment and Community Services Scrutiny Committee had done considerable work to develop the Council's vision for energy management and emphasised the need to resource this properly. It was also suggested that the Council could do more to support community education on climate change, and to ensure that its climate change initiatives were cost-effective. Some members suggested that some of these initiatives would more appropriately be funded from the Good Housekeeping Fund than from base budgets.

## Community Learning and Development

- Welcomed the Cabinet's recognition of the reports from the consultants and the Environment and Community Services Scrutiny Committee in agreeing to maintain funding for Heritage services at the 2005/06 level.

## Customer Service

- Expressed concern at the proposal to close three Register Office outstations, in Chatteris, St Neots and Wisbech. It was suggested that in Fenland, further consideration could be given to sharing with the District Council's one-stop shops, which were already equipped with broadband. However, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services, Councillor J Reynolds, noted that the costs of maintaining these outstations would include not only connection to broadband, but also additional costs to access national IT systems.

## **Corporate Services and Chief Executive's Department**

- Commented that it was difficult to judge the efficiency of Corporate Services in supporting the rest of the organisation. The Audit Commission provided an opinion, but this was not based on statistical benchmarking. Members suggested that, following 'Reshaping', it was possible that some organisational duplication was still to be eliminated. It was also noted that Cambridgeshire's expenditure on corporate support services was at about the national average, but that this should be considered in the context of its Council Tax, which was significantly below average.
- Commented on the need for investments in IT to be reflected more directly in reductions to staff numbers. Particular concern was expressed at the failure to join up some systems, which meant that staff were having to make manual transfers of data.
- Suggested that there were considerable savings to be made to the Council's expenditure on small works. Members expressed concern that there might be some collusion between suppliers bidding for local authority contracts. Nationally, this was an issue being addressed by the Competition Commission.

## **Overall budget proposals**

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Councillor Powley, spoke in support of the Cabinet's proposals on the overall budget proposals, including the consultation process. Councillor King spoke to the report of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee on these matters.

Two amendments were proposed:

### Liberal Democrat Group amendment

The following amendment was proposed by Councillor Huppert and

seconded by Councillor Downes:

Revenue Budget

(1)	To approve the Office cash limits set out in Table 1 of the Budget book, subject to the following amendments:	£
	Increased expenditure on energy management unit	40,000
	Create energy efficiency innovation fund	50,000
	Research project on efficiency of climate change measures (one-off)	10,000
	Initiate community engagement programme on climate change	50,000
	Restore bus subsidy grants	253,000
	Provide funding cushion for older people's services	500,000
	Reverse cuts in supported employment	50,000
	Increased funding for youth services	200,000
	Increased funding for Youth Offending Team	100,000
	Fund CYPS disability services	175,000
	Provide inflationary increase for grants to voluntary organisations	14,000
	Provide additional funding for grants to voluntary organisations	50,000
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,492,000</b>

	Savings in the Office of Corporate Services and the Chief Executive's Department	-506,000
	Renegotiation of terms of supply for packages of home care	-200,000
	Cease rental of Chairman's car	-6,500
	<b>Total</b>	<b>-712,500</b>

(2)	To approve a County Budget requirement in respect of general expenses applicable to the whole County area:	277,605,661
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(3)	To approve a recommended County Precept for Council Tax from District Councils:	184,010,565
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(to be received in ten equal instalments in accordance with the 'fall-back' provisions of the Local Authorities (Funds) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 1995);

(4)	To approve a Council Tax for each Band of property, based on the number of 'Band D' equivalent properties notified to the County Council by the District Council (206,313):
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Band	Council Tax	Band	Council Tax
A	£594.60	E	£1,090.10
B	£693.70	F	£1,288.30
C	£792.80	G	£1,486.50
D	£891.90	H	£1,783.80

(5) to (8) as set out in the Budget book.

Members made the following comments on the amendment:

- Expressed some concern at the late availability of this and the Labour amendments, and the lack of publicly available supporting information, which meant that it was difficult to assess the practicality of the proposals. The Liberal Democrat and Labour Groups noted that their proposals had been developing throughout the budget preparation process. They included some proposals for officer redundancies, meaning that it was not appropriate to make details publicly available at this stage. However, details had been provided to all Group Leaders in advance of the meeting. A suggestion was made and welcomed that greater opportunities should be provided in future years for Opposition amendments to the budget to be published and scrutinised in advance of the debate at full Council. It was agreed that this should be discussed by the Internal Political Management Working Party.
- Noted that the Liberal Democrat and Labour amendments included an allowance for redundancy costs, and part-year savings, recognising that redundancies would take time to implement. However, some members expressed concern that allowance had been made for only three months, with savings beginning from the second quarter of 2006/07, and that this was not a realistic timescale.
- Noted that the Cabinet's budget proposals for Corporate Services included reduction of 12.5 posts, or 1.7% of the total headcount. The Liberal Democrat amendment proposed a further 3% reduction to the headcount, or 1% of the Corporate Services total budget. It was suggested that, given the significant cuts proposed for frontline services, further reductions to back office functions were also appropriate.
- Noted that the Liberal Democrat amendment also proposed savings of £200,000, or 1% on the £20 million budget, from renegotiating home care contracts to achieve greater financial efficiency. Concern was expressed that the Council's payments to the independent sector were based on an hourly rate of £15.58, including a 4.2% allowance for inflation, when the average hourly rate for a home care worker was approximately £7.00. It was suggested that there were potentially considerable savings to be made by reducing independent sector providers' profit margins. Concern was also expressed that the Council's bulk procurement arrangements should be at least as cost-effective as the arrangements made by individuals in receipt of direct payments, who would receive only £14.68 an hour.

On being put to the vote, the amendment was defeated. [Voting pattern: Liberal Democrats in favour, Conservatives against, Labour Group abstained.]

#### Labour Group amendment

The following amendment was proposed by Councillor Sales and

seconded by Councillor Ballard:

Revenue Budget

- (1) To approve the Office cash limits set out in Table 1 of the Budget book, subject to the following amendments: £
- |  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| Initiate community engagement programme on climate change                | 50,000           |
| Restore bus subsidy grants   | 253,000          |
| Provide funding cushion for older people's services                      | 500,000          |
| Reverse cuts in supported employment                                     | 50,000           |
| Increased funding for youth services                                     | 200,000          |
| Increased funding for Youth Offending Team                               | 100,000          |
| Fund CYPS disability services  | 175,000          |
| Provide inflationary increase for grants to voluntary organisations      | 14,000           |
| Provide additional funding for grants to voluntary organisations         | 50,000           |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>1,392,000</b> |
| Savings in Office of Corporate Services and Chief Executive's Department | -200,000         |
| Improved letting and management of contracts                             | -412,500         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>-612,500</b>  |
- (2) To approve a County Budget requirement in respect of general expenses applicable to the whole County area: 277,605,661
- (3) To approve a recommended County Precept for Council Tax from District Councils: 184,010,565
- (to be received in ten equal instalments in accordance with the 'fall-back' provisions of the Local Authorities (Funds) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 1995);
- (4) To approve a Council Tax for each Band of property, based on the number of 'Band D' equivalent properties notified to the County Council by the District Council (206,313):

<b>Band</b>	<b>Council Tax</b>	<b>Band</b>	<b>Council Tax</b>
A	£594.60	E	£1,090.10
B	£693.70	F	£1,288.30
C	£792.80	G	£1,486.50
D	£891.90	H	£1,783.80

- (5) to (8) as set out in the Budget book.

Members made the following comment on the Labour amendment:

- Commented that the issue raised in the Labour amendment relating to possible savings to be made to the Council's expenditure on small

works was serious and should be addressed, but some members felt that it was too early to quantify the level of savings that might result.

On being put to the vote, the amendment was defeated. [Voting pattern: Labour and Liberal Democrat Groups in favour, Conservatives against.]

During the debate on the general budget and the two amendments, the following issues were discussed:

#### Cambridgeshire's Settlement

- Noted that the Council's grant settlement for 2006/07 was very difficult. Cambridgeshire's grant would be close to the floor nationally in 2006/07, and, according to the details already announced, would be at the floor for 2007/08.
- Noted that the resource equalisation mechanism in the new four block formula meant that funding was being redistributed nationally from more affluent to more deprived areas. Members expressed concern that this redistribution did not take into account the needs of rapidly growing areas such as Cambridgeshire. Members also expressed concern that, whilst Cambridgeshire was relatively prosperous, the Council was responsible for providing services for its most vulnerable residents, who relied on services such as social care and public transport.
- Expressed concern that the new four block formula was not transparent and that it was very difficult to make comparisons with the Council's settlement in previous years. Clarification had been requested from Government but had still not been received. There was also concern over some specific elements of the formula; for example, the Government was claiming that local authorities' capital borrowing was fully supported by revenue, but, if this was the case, then it appeared that the increase to Cambridgeshire's settlement overall was less than the published figure of 2.1%.

#### Council Tax increase

- Noted that the Cabinet's budget proposals involved a Council Tax increase of 5%. Both the Liberal Democrat and the Labour amendments were based on Council Tax increases of 5.4%, plus additional savings to services. A 5.4% increase would be the highest percentage rise currently proposed by any County Council and would be equivalent to an increase of 88 pence per week for a Band D property, as compared to an increase of 81 pence per week for a 5% increase. All three options on which consultation had been carried out, 4%, 5% and 6%, would involve significant cuts to services.
- Noted that the Government's stated intention was to use its capping powers to limit the national average Council Tax increase to 5%. It was unclear whether local variations for increases in excess of 5% would be acceptable. This had not been the case for 2005/06. No other Shire Counties were currently thought to be proposing an increase in excess of 5%.

- Noted that if the Government were to use its capping powers to reduce Cambridgeshire's proposed increase, the cost to the Council for re-billing had been estimated at approximately £500,000. Some members expressed concern that, given the likelihood of a 5% cap being applied, it was not appropriate to risk this expense by proposing a higher increase.
- Expressed concern that in using the capping mechanism, the Government was unlikely to make distinctions between authorities whose existing Council Tax levels were significantly below the national average, such as Cambridgeshire, and those whose were significantly above the national average. Applying a uniform cap at 5% would mean that the difference in income that authorities at either end of the spectrum were able to raise through Council Tax would continue to widen. It was suggested that it would be fairer to allow authorities charging below-average Council Tax to move towards the average, whilst restricting the increases of those authorities whose Council Taxes were already above the average.
- Expressed concern that one element of the new four block formula for determining local authorities' grant settlements was based on an assessment of their ability to raise income from Council Tax. Cambridgeshire was considered to be relatively affluent and in a good position to raise income through the Council Tax, meaning that its grant from central Government had been restricted. However, the capping mechanism meant that the amount that Cambridgeshire was in practice able to raise through the Council Tax was in fact limited

#### Influences on the budget

- Expressed concern that, with the introduction of multi-year settlements, it was already known that Cambridgeshire would receive an even more difficult financial settlement in 2007/08. There were significant unidentified savings to be made in the emerging budget proposals for 2007/08. The even more difficult context for 2007/08 needed to be considered now, since spending commitments made for 2006/07 would carry forward into the following year.
- Emphasised the need to pursue Gershon efficiencies as far as possible, making savings on delivery without actual reductions to frontline services.
- Emphasised the need to invest fully in early intervention and Invest to Save measures, to avoid having to pay higher costs later.
- Emphasised that rates of inflation for different parts of the Council's budget were considerably higher than the basic rate, causing considerable pressure. This pressure was often not clearly understood by the public.
- Noted that the Council had benefited in 2005/06 from low interest rates, but that the budget for 2006/07 would be at risk if they were to rise significantly.

- Emphasised the need for local people and local priorities to come first, before the Government's priorities as suggested through the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) process, and that expenditure purely to improve the Council's CPA score would not be acceptable.
- Commented on the need to modify targets and expectations of staff in services where resources were being reduced, and to manage public expectations of these services.

### Consultation process

- Commended Cambridgeshire's budget consultation process, which compared very favourably with those of other local authorities. Comprehensive consultation had been carried out on the proposals, involving budget holders, members, partners and the public. Public consultation had included a telephone poll of 750 residents, a deliberative opinion poll involving 50 residents, library surgeries and the publication of information in leaflets and on the internet. The majority of people responding via leaflets and the internet had supported a 6% Council Tax increase. The majority of respondents to the polls had supported 5%.
- Expressed concern at some aspects of the consultation process, including the fact that the Cabinet had made its recommendations to Council before the consultation had closed and that only four members of the public had attended the surgery held in Wisbech library. These aspects would be reviewed for future years.
- Commented on the need also to take account of the recent survey of the Council's priorities, which had been carried out separately from the budget consultation. In this survey, 29% of respondents had stated that they would be willing to pay increased Council Tax better to fund older people's services, but only 4% better to fund libraries.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Walters, then summed up on behalf of the Cabinet. Council voted on the motion and it was resolved:

### Revenue Budget

- |     |  |                  |
|-----|--|------------------|
| (1) | To approve the Office cash limits set out in Table 1 of the updated Budget book;                           |                  |
| (2) | To approve a County Budget requirement in respect of general expenses applicable to the whole County area: | £<br>276,825,798 |
| (3) | To approve a recommended County Precept for Council Tax from District Councils:                            | 183,230,702      |

(to be received in ten equal instalments in accordance with the 'fall-back' provisions of the Local Authorities (Funds) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 1995);

- (4) To approve a Council Tax for each Band of property, based on the number of 'Band D' equivalent properties notified to the County Council by the District Council (206,313):

<b>Band</b>	<b>Council Tax</b>	<b>Band</b>	<b>Council Tax</b>
A	£592.08	E	£1,085.48
B	£690.76	F	£1,282.84
C	£789.44	G	£1,480.20
D	£888.12	H	£1,776.24

- (5) To approve the Prudential Indicators as set out on page 20 of the Budget book;
- (6) To approve the Council's Treasury Management Strategy as set out on page 21 of the Budget book;
- (7) To note the report of the Director of Finance and Performance on the robustness of the estimates and levels of reserves as set out on pages 22 to 25 of the Budget book.

#### Capital Budget

- (8) To approve Capital Payments in 2006/07 up to £85.2 million arising from:
- Commitments from schemes already approved; and
  - The consequences of new starts (for the three years 2006/07 to 2008/09) listed in the Office reports contained in the Budget summary document,

subject to the receipt of appropriate capital resources, or when the Director of Finance and Performance is satisfied that sufficient funds have been secured, and the scheme's business case has been approved through the Council's project management arrangements.

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

#### 2) Cambridgeshire's Local Area Agreement

It was proposed by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Walters, seconded by the Deputy Leader, Councillor Reynolds and agreed unanimously:

To approve the Local Area Agreement as a new policy framework document and that it should become a part of the Council's Constitution.

Councillor Huppert noted that the Liberal Democrat Group was supporting the Agreement because it was mandated by Government, but had continuing concerns about governance arrangements and the involvement of elected members.

### 3) Disclosures Policy – Elected Members

It was proposed by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Walters, and seconded by the Deputy Leader, Councillor Reynolds, that the Council:

- (i) Adopts the Disclosures Policy for Members as attached as an appendix to the report
- (ii) Agrees that the following are subject to enhanced checks:
  - a) All members of Cabinet
  - b) Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council
  - c) Opposition Spokespersons for Children and Young People's Services and for Environment and Community Services [whose remit includes vulnerable adults and older people]
  - d) Members of the Adoption and Fostering Panels
  - e) Assigned visitors for children's homes
  - f) Members engaged in regular liaison with young people or vulnerable group representative bodies such as the Youth Parliament
- (iii) Agrees that, in the interim, the requirement for standard checks will be restricted to the following:

Scrutiny Committees:

- a) Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee
- b) Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee

Service Development Groups (SDGs)

- a) Children and Young People's Services Inclusion SDG
- b) Children and Young People's Services Planning and Development SDG
- c) Community Learning and Development and Adult Social Care SDG

- (iv) Agrees that following the next full local government elections, the system should be expanded to include a standard check for all members, as well as the enhanced checks set out in recommendation (ii).

Councillor Walters explained that it was the Cabinet's long-term aim to ensure that all Councillors received Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks. However, in recognition of opposition from some members, an interim scheme until the next election was proposed.

A number of members spoke in support of the full scheme, emphasising the need to ensure the protection of the most vulnerable members of Cambridgeshire's community, including adults and older people as well as children. Considerable trust was placed in Councillors as public figures, and a policy of requiring CRB checks would reinforce this trust. It would also show leadership by members to Council employees who were

required to have CRB checks as part of their conditions of employment. It was noted that many members had already received CRB checks.

Other members spoke against the proposals, noting that other figures in public life with access to vulnerable people, such as school governors, were not required to be CRB-checked. It was also noted that some Councillors had very limited contact with vulnerable individuals and suggested that, given the pressures on the CRB-checking process, there were other individuals who were a much higher priority to be checked. It was noted that CRB clearance was no guarantee either that an individual had no existing history of offending, or that they would not offend in future, and that a policy of requiring checks could lead to a false sense of security. Concern was also expressed at the procedure that would be followed if a CRB check on an existing Councillor showed a positive trace. It was suggested that the proposals to introduce checks were motivated more by a desire to avoid adverse publicity than to ensure the genuine safeguarding of vulnerable individuals.

A recorded vote was requested, the details of which are attached as Appendix 1 to these minutes. The motion was carried by 46 votes to 6, with 2 abstentions.

#### Key decisions for information

- 4) Designation of Nature Reserves
- 5) Accident Remedies and Traffic Management Programme – Medium-Sized Safety Schemes

Councillor King welcomed the traffic calming measures agreed for Walton Road in Wisbech, but suggested that Norfolk County Council should be asked to contribute to their cost. The measures were needed because of a planning decision on which Cambridgeshire had been inadequately consulted, which had led to increased HGV movements.

- 6) Amendment of the Cambridgeshire Minerals and Waste Development Scheme
- 7) Addenbrooke's Access Road

#### Other decisions

- 8) Member Led Review on Energy Management – Report from the Environment and Community Services Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Ballard commended the Scrutiny Committee's report, but expressed concern that the Council had not yet taken adequate account of the sharp rise in energy prices that was likely to occur as oil and gas reserves ran out.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Councillor Powley, commented that this risk had been identified and would be more fully addressed by the new energy management unit. The Council held a large property portfolio and there was thought to be scope to introduce

significant energy efficiencies.

- 9) Efficiency Strategy
- 10) Corporate Disability Discrimination Act 1995 Compliance Strategy 2004-09

Councillor Ballard welcomed the Strategy, but emphasised the importance of meeting the needs of people with sensory impairments, as well as those with mobility impairments. Councillor Lucas, the Cabinet's Lead Member for Diversity, noted that the Strategy addressed the needs of people with a wide range of disabilities. It had been developed in consultation with the Disabled Staff Support Group and was supported by funding of £100,000 over the next three years.

- 11) Cambridge Southern Fringe Cycle Issues

#### Other matters

- 12) Public Consultation on Council Priorities
- 13) Responses to Public Consultation on the Future of Mental Health Services in Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire

Councillor Sales expressed concern that Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire PCTs had implemented a number of the proposed changes to mental health services before the consultation process had been completed. He also expressed concern that the changes were likely to have substantial cost implications in coming years for the County Council's social care budgets.

- 14) Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)

Councillor Huppert welcomed the Cabinet's decision to place greatest emphasis on local needs and priorities, rather than the pursuit of high CPA scores. However, he also expressed concern that the Council's current assessments as 'good' and 'improving well', 3 out of a possible 4 on both scales, were only median nationally, suggesting that services were not performing as well as they could be.

Councillor Stone asked whether the reference in the Council's Strategic Risk Register to the risk of failing to maintain CPA status would be removed. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Walters, noted that the Cabinet would shortly be considering updates to the Register.

#### Part 2 Exempt Reports

- 15) Extension of Frozen Meals Service Contract
- 16) Future Sourcing Arrangements for Property Design and Construction Services

## Meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2006

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Walters, moved receipt of the report of the meeting of Cabinet held on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2006.

### Key decisions

#### 1) Cash Support to Primary Care Trusts (PCTs)

It was proposed by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Walters, and seconded by the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Councillor Powley, that:

- (i) The Council approves a formal cash loan to one or more of the local PCTs, with an aggregate value of no more than £2.5 million, the loan period to commence on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006 and end on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2006
- (ii) The Council delegates responsibility to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services in consultation with the Director of Finance and Performance to ensure that the PCTs have the legal powers to enter into such an agreement and that as a final resort, the loan will be guaranteed by the Secretary of State for Health and that the Council's position is safeguarded via the continuing management of the net creditor/debtor relationship with the PCTs after any loan has been made
- (iii) In any final letter of approval, reference should be made to the importance that the County Council places on the partnership arrangements and that in agreeing the loan, the County Council requires to be consulted in future on any significant policy proposals which affect our own services, such as the recent closure of wards in hospitals such as Hinchbrook.

The Leader of the Council accepted two suggested changes to the recommendations as set out in the report of the Cabinet meeting, to 'require' consultation on any significant policy proposals affecting the Council's own services, and to include the start and end dates for the loan. These have been incorporated into the motion set out above.

A number of members expressed concerns about the proposed loan, including:

- Whether it was appropriate for the Council to become involved in the PCTs' day-to-day financial management
- Whether it was appropriate for the Council to treat the PCTs differently from other debtors and creditors
- Whether the loan was necessary, given the significant increases in funding given to the NHS by the Government in recent years
- Why the PCTs were not seeking the loan from more conventional sources
- How the loan would relate to existing PCT debts to the County Council, and any debts newly arising
- Whether other more profitable investment options were available to

the Council

- How the risk to the County Council would be managed, and what would happen if the PCTs were unable to repay the loan.

Responding to these concerns, the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services noted that appropriate safeguarding measures would be taken and that they were satisfied that the loan was an appropriate investment for the Council, which would lead to guaranteed interest payments at 1% above base rate. They also emphasised that the PCTs were a key partner to the Council in the provision of health and social care, and that it was in the Council's interests to work with them to ensure the delivery of high-quality services.

A vote was taken and the motion, as amended, was carried. [Voting pattern: Conservative and Labour Groups in favour, Liberal Democrats opposed, one abstention.]

## 2) Corporate Plan 2006/07 – 2008/09 Refresh

It was proposed by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Walters and seconded by the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Councillor Powley, to

- (i) Approve the revisions to the Corporate Plan and subsequent publication of the Plan
- (ii) Authorise the Leader of the Council in consultation with the Chief Executive to agree any further minor revisions as the result of updates finalised following the Council meeting.

Councillor Huppert expressed support for the aspirations set out in the Corporate Plan, but concern that they would not be realised unless properly funded. He also reminded members that the Liberal Democrat Group did not support the Cambridgeshire guided busway.

Councillor Kent suggested that equity should be placed at the top of the list of the Council's values. She also commented on the need for new communities themselves to be sustainable, as well as the transport serving them. She asked for the Plan to be proofread carefully prior to publication.

Responding, the Leader of the Council, Councillor Walters, and the Cabinet Member for Cabinet Services, Councillor Powley, emphasised that the development of the Plan was an iterative process and that it would be reviewed again in the context of decisions made at this meeting.

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

## 3) 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 proposed by the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services, Councillor J Reynolds, seconded by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Walters, and agreed unanimously to

Approve the Statement of Community Involvement, as amended.

4) Incorporation of Connexions Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

It 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 to

Incorporate Connexions Cambridgeshire and Peterborough into the County Council and Peterborough City Council.

Other decisions for information

5) The Government's Response to the Barker Review: Consultations on Draft Planning Policy Statement 3 (Housing); Draft Planning Policy Statement 25 (Development and Flood Risk); Proposals for a Planning Gain Supplement; and a Code for Sustainable Homes

Councillor Ballard welcomed the Cabinet's response to these consultations. He emphasised that Cambridge should not become a dormitory for people commuting to London, a trend that appeared to be emerging with the new developments close to the station.

He and a number of other members expressed concern at the proposal to introduce a Planning Gain Supplement, which could lead to resources being redistributed nationally from prosperous areas of rapid growth, such as Cambridgeshire, to more deprived areas. Concern was also expressed that, if introduced, the Supplement would affect the current balance between local and national arrangements for bringing forward infrastructure to support new development. In particular, it was not clear how education and public transport to support new communities would be funded. These changes would reduce local democracy and accountability in the development of new communities. Introduction of the Supplement, which would increase taxation on landowners bringing forward land for development, could also cause the supply of housing land to dry up.

Councillor Johnstone expressed support for the proposed Code for Sustainable Homes, commenting that a lead from Government would be essential in ensuring that new homes were built to more energy-efficient designs.

Responding, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services, Councillor J Reynolds, noted that many local authorities shared Cambridgeshire's concerns about the proposed Planning Gain Supplement. He agreed to send copies of the finalised response to the consultations to all members.

6) Cambridgeshire Guided Busway – Procurement

Councillor Huppert expressed concern at the proposal that Government funding for the Cambridgeshire guided busway be phased to 2010/11, when it was proposed that the busway would open in 2008.

Responding, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, Councillor J Reynolds, explained that the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) had been asked by Government to rank proposed major transport schemes for the East of England, 135 in total, to assist with the allocation of available funding over the next 10 years. However, officers working on the Cambridgeshire guided busway were confident that Government would provide funding for the busway to enable it to be developed ahead of the timescale set out in EERA's ranking.

7) South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework – Consultation on the Submission Draft Documents

8) Revised Enforcement Policy and Procedures for Cross-Field and Headland Paths

9) Cambridgeshire Horizons Board – English Partnerships Membership

**58. WRITTEN QUESTIONS**

No written questions had been submitted under Council Procedure Rule 9.

**59. ORAL QUESTIONS**

Two oral questions were asked under Council Procedure Rule 9:

- Councillor Huppert asked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services, Councillor J Reynolds, about the decision made by the Cambridge City Traffic Management Area Joint Committee in October 2005 to advertise a residents' parking scheme in the Rathmore Road area. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services had subsequently been asked to determine whether this was in accordance with the County's policy. An update was now requested. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services noted that the Council's policy on on-street car parking was currently under review and would be the subject of a report to Cabinet the following week.
- Councillor Bean asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Walters, about the Council's responsibility for remedial action to address contaminated land in Littleport. She also asked the Council to join other households in the vicinity in lobbying Government, because their properties had been affected by planning blight. The Leader of the Council agreed to provide a written response to her questions.

**60. MOTIONS**

No motions had been submitted under Council Procedure Rule 10.

**61. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

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

- Councillor Curtis to replace Councillor Brown as one of the Council's representatives on the Local Government Association
- Councillor Higginson to be appointed as a substitute member on the Environment and Community Services Scrutiny Committee
- Councillor Stone to replace Councillor Jenkins as a member of the Development Control Committee
- Councillor Jenkins to be appointed as a substitute member on the Development Control Committee.

Chairman: