



EAST
CAMBRIDGESHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of East Cambridgeshire
District Council held in the Council Chamber,
The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on Thursday
25 February 2016 at 6.00pm

PRESENT

Councillor Allen Alderson	Councillor Richard Hobbs
Councillor Michael Allan (Chairman)	Councillor Julia Huffer
Councillor Christine Ambrose-Smith	Councillor Mark Hugo
Councillor David Ambrose-Smith	Councillor Bill Hunt
Councillor Sue Austen	Councillor Chris Morris
Councillor Anna Bailey	Councillor James Palmer
Councillor Derrick Beckett	Councillor Andy Pearson
Councillor Ian Bovingdon	Councillor Charles Roberts
Councillor Mike Bradley	Councillor Mike Rouse
Councillor Steve Cheetham	Councillor Joshua Schumann
Councillor Paul Cox	Councillor Alan Sharp
Councillor Peter Cresswell (Vice-Chairman)	Councillor Mathew Shuter
Councillor Lorna Dupré	Councillor Stuart Smith
Councillor Lis Every	Councillor Jo Webber
Councillor Coralie Green	

71. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

The following question was received from Barbara Grafton and read out in her absence regarding the Planning application for the proposed development at Barton Road, Ely:

'I am writing to pose a question concerning the above planning application by ECDC to erect 11 residential dwellings at Barton Road Car Park, Ely. Also relevant is the recent announcement of the Council's intention to close the public toilets in the Barton Road car park.

I have read, on ECDC's Planning Portal, the email concerning this planning application sent by Lorraine Reade, Managing Director of Lambert's Coaches (Beccles) Ltd., (copy attached). In her email, Ms. Reade states:

"If [coach] parking was removed, I fear that we would be forced to maybe go to other places for day trips, etc. We bring lots of groups to Ely for the day every year, as we are only about a 2 hour journey away, and places like the Cathedral are always very popular."

Ms. Reade also writes that the coach park give the drivers opportunity to have a suitable rest break, and the toilet facilities make her company more likely to come to Ely “rather than places such as Cambridge, where facilities are very limited”. She concludes: “Use us, don’t lose us as they say.”

Has the Council undertaken, or does it intend to undertake, a comprehensive survey of ALL coach companies visiting Ely to seek their opinions on being restricted to 15 minutes in Barton Road car park and then having to drive to the city outskirts to park where there are no facilities for their drivers?

If such a survey is not in the Council’s thinking, it clearly is not undertaking an adequate risk assessment of the consequences of this proposed development on Ely’s vital tourism revenues, or on the operating safety of coaches.’

The question was responded to by the Leader of the Council, Councillor James Palmer, as follows:

The Council is committed to providing alternative coach parking in Ely in close proximity to driver facilities. Specific proposals to provide sensible alternatives will form the basis of a public exhibition which will detail all aspects of the Barton Road Development.

72. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brown, Chaplin, Edwards, Griffin-Singh, Hitchin, Ross, Sennitt and Stubbs.

73. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interests were received.

74. **MINUTES**

Councillor Bailey referred to an amendment required to her speech on the Motion on Council Tax in the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 January 2016, as detailed in the resolution below.

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 January 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the amendment of the sixth sentence of the sixth main paragraph of Minute 62(b) relating to the Motion on Council Tax to read:

'Taking the £4.8M would not address the **£31M** cut *in the Children and Families and Adults Directorate* and therefore the County Council needed to do things differently.'

75. **BOTTISHAM DISTRICT WARD BY-ELECTION RESULT**

Council considered a report, Q200, previously circulated, detailing the result of the Bottisham By-Election held on 4 February 2016 and the allocation of seats on Committees, etc, arising therefrom.

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Sharp to his first meeting as a newly elected Councillor and Councillor Sharp stated that he was very pleased to be present in this capacity.

Councillor Bill Hunt stated that he would like to congratulate Councillor Sharp on his election, particularly since he had got to know him during campaigning for the seat.

It was resolved:

That the election of Councillor Alan Sharp as a District Councillor for the Bottisham Ward and the allocation of seats on Committees, etc, to him arising therefrom be noted.

76. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman made the following announcements:

Chairman's Reception 11 March 2016

The Chairman reminded Members that his Chairman's Reception would be held on 11 March 2016 at The Maltings, Ely. The Chairman stated that up to 120 people would be attending the Reception and it gave a good opportunity to meet and exchange views with representatives of other authorities. He requested Members who had not already done so to reply to Lynne Smart to confirm their attendance.

Cancellation of 19 April full Council meeting

The Chairman stated that as the report on the new Leisure Centre funding strategy now will be submitted to a future Council meeting, the full Council meeting scheduled for 19 April 2016 will be cancelled. The Chairman asked Members to amend their diaries accordingly.

77. **PETITIONS**

No Petitions had been received.

78. **MOTIONS**

No motions were received.

79. **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS**

The following question was asked by Councillor Mathew Shuter on behalf of the Members detailed below in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13.2:

Due to a string of justifiable complaints from local tenants, we the undersigned, namely:

Councillors Cresswell and Shuter (Cheveley)
Councillor Sharp (Bottisham)
Councillor Morris (Dullingham Villages)

have no confidence in the local management of Sanctuary Housing.

Can I request that the Leader of Council instructs the Chief Executive to convene an urgent meeting with senior management representatives of Sanctuary Housing, relevant East Cambridgeshire DC Directors and Councillors to express our serious concerns.

The question was responded to by the Leader of the Council, Councillor James Palmer, who agreed to the Councillors' request.

80. **2016/17 ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY, MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION (MRP) POLICY STATEMENT AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY (AIS)**

Council considered a report, Q201, previously circulated, containing the proposed 2016/17 Annual Treasury Management Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy (AIS).

The Chief Financial Officer explained that the Strategy set out how the Council would manage its cash flows and investments, putting security, liquidity and yield as the foundations of a good treasury management strategy.

The Strategy also proposed some changes from past approaches. Firstly, the Council's cash investments were heavily tied up in Money Market Funds (MMFs), offering immediate liquidity but poor returns. With clarity over the cash flow requirements for the Local Authority Trading Company (LATC), and looking ahead to the needs for the leisure centre, the Council now could produce a more robust cash flow projection, meaning it could move away from MMFs into fixed term deposits which offered better returns. It was proposed in the Strategy that this approach be adopted immediately following this meeting.

Secondly, the Strategy made provision for funding of the LATC from internal funds at this stage and considered the funding implications of the leisure centre. Should that be approved, the Council could move into a borrowing position, and the type of borrowing and when to take it would be an important decision for this Council. It was proposed to bring these issues back to full Council when a decision was sought on the new leisure centre.

Councillor Dupré referred to the two elements of borrowing detailed in the report for the Local Authority Trading Company (LATC) and proposed new leisure centre. With regard to the LATC, Councillor Dupré highlighted recent media reports that the Shropshire LATC had folded earlier this month after less than 4 years of operation, stating that the market was not there to justify the company's existence. The staff were being transferred back to the Council. Councillor Dupré asked whether the Council could learn lessons from this and how would these be reported to Members. The Chief Financial Officer stated that a key issue was the management of risk, which had been covered in the Business Plan for the LATC. The Shareholder Committee would also have a role in risk monitoring.

Councillor David Ambrose-Smith stated that he had every confidence in the financial management in place within the Council.

It was resolved:

That approval be given to:

- The 2016/17 Treasury Management Strategy;
- The Annual Investment Strategy;
- The Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement;
- The Prudential and Treasury Indicators;

as set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report.

81. **COMMUNITY LED DEVELOPMENT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD)**

Council considered a report, Q202, previously circulated, containing the final draft of the Community-Led Development Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), taking account of public consultation late last year on the draft version of the SPD.

The Strategic Planning Manager reminded Members that full Council on 22 October 2015 had approved a 'glossy' guide on Community Land Trusts (CLTs) and Community-Led Development, which had been published and circulated to parishes to provide them with information, guidance and assistance. Council also had approved the draft SPD for public consultation. This consultation now had been concluded and the report detailed the responses received, which had resulted in some amendments to the SPD. If the SPD was adopted, it would become part of the Local Plan policy framework.

Councillor Green commended Richard and his Team on the document which was clear, readable and would help communities to provide quality affordable housing.

Councillor Dupré stated that viability assessments were key to the provision of affordable housing. Therefore, she asked whether this Council would be following the lead of other Councils such as Greenwich LBC in publishing all such viability assessments. The Leader of the Council declined to respond to the question as this was not relevant to CLTs and Community-Led Development.

Councillor Beckett commented that Richard Kay and his Team had produced a comprehensive document and queried where the Government's Starter Homes programme would fit in with this. Mr Kay stated that the Government's Starter Homes programme currently was still a proposal linked to the Housing and Planning Bill. The Government was still consulting on how Starter Homes would work in practice. The Local Plan Working Group and Council could consider the implications of it, if it came into operation.

Councillor Roberts stated that this authority stood out as one of the few in the Country actively promoting and supporting CLTs and he commended this document.

It was resolved:

That the "Community-Led Development Supplementary Planning Document", attached at Appendix 2 to the submitted report, be adopted.

82. **REVENUE BUDGET, CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND COUNCIL TAX 2016/17**

Council considered a report, Q203, previously circulated, detailing the Council's proposed Revenue and Capital Budgets and the required level of Council Tax for 2016/17. The report also assessed the robustness of the budgets, the adequacy of reserves and updated the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. Attention was drawn to the Appendix 1 containing the formal Council Tax Resolution reflecting the County Council precept decision, which had been circulated and tabled at the meeting. A revised motion also was tabled at the meeting containing an additional proposed resolution in relation to the additional Rural Services Grant of £122,000 received by the Council in the final settlement.

The Chief Financial Officer introduced his report by stating that the Revenue Budget reflected all known cost pressures and the reduction in government funding. There was one change between the provisional and final grant settlement, in that this Council was given an additional £122,000 in Rural Services Grant, which was not expected.

Management actions to continually look to reduce the cost base, plus growth in Business Rates and the Council Tax Base, had meant that the Budget had been balanced with:

- 1 Little recourse to drawing on reserves; and
- 2 A freeze in this Council's element of the Council Tax- with a Band D remaining at £142.14.

Looking to the future, the Medium Term Financial Strategy identified major challenges, mainly as a result of significant reductions in government grant both Revenue Support Grant and New Homes Bonus, leading to grant ending by 2020. Based on current information and assumptions, the 2017/18 Budget could be balanced, but future years presented challenges.

From 2020, the government intended to implement a new funding regime for local authorities, built on retaining all business rates collected. There was much uncertainty at this stage as to how this might work, so the financial picture from 2020 and beyond was unknown.

The Chief Financial Officer stated that the Capital Programme included the funding of the LATC and capital receipts anticipated for Barton Close, Witchford, Barton Road and the Vineyards, Ely. These receipts were assumed to be earmarked to provide some of the funding for the leisure centre; and would be reflected into a revised Capital Programme should the Council approve that project at a future meeting.

The revised motion tabled at the meeting was proposed by Councillor Palmer and seconded by Councillor Roberts.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Palmer, stated that he had great pleasure in proposing the motion as, through a great deal of hard work, the Council was fortunate to have a balanced Budget with a Council Tax freeze. He commended the hard work of Officers to achieve this and stated that tough decisions had been made to produce a lean Council. This also gave the opportunity to provide funding to rural communities of £122K to be passed directly to these communities with few caveats. However, the Council needed to continue to examine its working practices to ensure that it was as efficient as possible and to become self-sufficient, due to the proposed termination of Government grant funding from 2020. Therefore, Councillor Palmer commended this Budget and Council Tax freeze to the Council.

Councillor Beckett asked what the phrase 'rural initiatives' meant in the resolution relating to Rural Services Grant. Councillor Palmer stated that Commercial Services Committee was being tasked to decide the details, but the funding was to be divided evenly between the 42 rural settings, to be spent within 12 months and not absorbed into the parish precept, with the District Council receiving a report on how it was spent.

Councillor Bill Hunt stated that because of 'good housekeeping', the Council was able to help the smallest communities to show our commitment to them and the fact that we were not just spending our money on the larger settlements.

Councillor Dupré stated that, as the Lib Dems now were a small opposition group of two, they would not be proposing a fully-costed alternative Budget this year. However, she did wish to highlight a few key areas. The Chancellor through the Settlement expected Councils to raise Council Tax by 2% and there was no longer any Council Tax Freeze Grant available to Councils. Therefore, this Council had to consider the effect on its base of not doing so, the Budget deficit in 2019/20 and should not be looking to plug Budget gaps by the use of General Fund Reserves. On the issue of Rural Services Grant, this was a case of the Council 'giving with one hand but taking with the other', as it had decided only to pass on one quarter of the Council Tax Benefit Support Grant onto parishes. Councillor Dupré also suggested that part of the Rural Services Grant also could have been retained centrally by the Council to employ a 'fund-finder' to assist parishes to tap into other available sources of funding. Councillor Dupré referred to the reduction in funding for both mandatory and discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants and the fact that the Council was no longer requiring the construction of wheelchair accessible homes. On a point of order, Councillor Schumann, as Chair of Planning Committee, stated that the Council was not approving the construction of homes that were not wheelchair accessible, but was merely not requiring the higher specification. Councillor Dupré also highlighted the fact that the Council was proposing to construct a new leisure centre whilst closing public conveniences. She referred to the inclusion in the Budget of funding arising from the sale of land at Barton Road and The Vineyards, Ely, and queried if this presented a conflict of interest for Members of the Planning Committee in voting on the Budget.

Councillor Bailey commended the Council on an excellent job in producing a balanced Budget and Council Tax freeze. It also had kept its pledge not to charge for town centre car parking and had not increased the charges for the two station car parks at Ely and Littleport, thereby supporting hard working residents and commuters. There also had been no increase in tourism charges such as at Oliver Cromwell House. The Rural Services Grant was not recurring funding, so was not being mixed up in the Revenue Budget. Councillor Bailey stated that this was a good Budget by a forward thinking Council.

Councillors Schumann and Rouse, as Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Planning Committee, asked for advice as to whether Members of the Planning Committee were able to vote on the Budget due to the inclusion of the funding from the sale of land at Barton Road and The Vineyards, Ely. The Legal Services Manager and Monitoring Officer stated that she would be issuing advice and guidance to Members in the near future on the issues of declarations/conflicts of interests, predetermination, etc, relating to land disposals and consideration of Planning applications regarding Council-owned

land. At this point, a brief adjournment was agreed to consider the advice to be given on the particular issue of the Budget.

The meeting was adjourned at 6.40pm and reconvened at 6.44pm.

On re-convening, the Legal Services Manager and Monitoring Officer advised that the Budget included the selling of particular areas of Council-owned land and not the consideration of the particular Planning issues which would go to the Planning Committee at the appropriate time when the applications would be considered on their merits and Planning grounds based on the facts. Therefore, the Legal Services Manager and Monitoring Officer did not believe that there was a conflict of interest and Members of the Planning Committee could vote on the Budget.

In accordance with the requirements of The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, a recorded vote was taken on the Motion, the results of which were as follows:

FOR: (27) – Cllrs Alderson, Allan, C Ambrose Smith, D Ambrose Smith, Bailey, Beckett, Bovingdon, Bradley, Cheetham, Cox, Cresswell, Every, Green, Hobbs, Huffer, Hugo, B Hunt, Morris, Palmer, Pearson, Roberts, Rouse, J Schumann, Sharp, Shuter, Smith, Webber.

AGAINST: (0).

ABSTENTIONS: (2) – Cllrs Austen, Dupré.

The Motion was declared to be carried.

It was resolved:

1. That the formal Budget resolution, which calculates the Council Tax requirement, as set out in Appendix 1 of the submitted report, be adopted.
2. That the draft 2016/17 Revenue Budget, set out in Appendix 2 of the submitted report, which includes a Council Tax freeze be approved.
3. That the Statement of Reserves, as set out in Appendix 3 of the submitted report, be approved.
4. That the Fees and Charges 2016/17, as set out in Appendix 4 of the submitted report, be approved.
5. That the Capital Programme and financing, as set out at Appendix 5 of the submitted report, be approved.
6. That the additional Rural Services Grant of £122,000 announced for 2016/17 in the final settlement, be allocated to fund rural initiatives within the District and that the Commercial Services

Committee be tasked with determining an appropriate framework for how the budget should be distributed.

83. **PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2016/17**

Council considered a report, Q204 previously circulated, detailing the Council's Pay Policy Statement for 2016/17 in accordance with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011.

The Chairman explained to Members the origin of the HAY Job Evaluation Scheme.

Councillors Christine Ambrose-Smith, Cox and Webber left the meeting at 6.47pm and did not return.

The HR Manager reminded Members that staff progression now would be performance-related and also highlighted that the current bottom three pay points on the 'Green Book' pay spine of SCP6 £7.06 (£13,614); SCP7 £7.11 (£13,715); and SCP8 £7.19 (£13,871) would have their pay increased in accordance with the National Living Wage from 1 April 2016, which in local government equated to £13,891 per annum (£7.20 per hour). The ratio between the highest grade and lowest grade at the scale minimum pay point was 1:8.59. The HR Manager stated that new Regulations had been drafted concerning exit payments in the public sector, the first being the Public Sector Exit Payment Regulations and the second being the Repayment of Public Sector Exit Payment Regulations which were both due to come into effect later this year. The first applied a cap of £95,000 on exit payments, and the second allowed for the recovery of exit payments when a high earner returned to any part of the public sector within 12 months after exit. Relevant Council employment policies would be amended once the full details and implications were known.

The Chairman of Regulatory and Support Services Committee, Councillor Bailey, thanked the HR Manager for the report and stated that the Regulatory and Support Services Committee still was committed to looking at the issue of the implications of the Living Wage for staff.

Councillor Schumann referred to ratio between the highest grade and lowest grade within the Council and queried if the Council should consider having a specific policy on pay ratios and if any monitoring was undertaken as to how we compared with other authorities. The HR Manager stated that she had undertaken a comparison with our two closest neighbouring comparable Councils and South Cambridgeshire DC had a ratio of 1:9 and Fenland DC 1:10.

It was resolved:

That the 2016/17 Pay Policy Statement be approved and adopted.

The meeting concluded at 6.50pm.

Chairman.....

Date

DRAFT