

Minutes of the meeting of the Regulatory and Support Services Committee  
held in the Vernon Cross Room, Ely Museum, Ely  
on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2016 at 4:30pm

**P R E S E N T**

Councillor Anna Bailey (Chairman)  
Councillor Sue Austen  
Councillor Mike Bradley  
Councillor Peter Cresswell  
Councillor Julia Huffer  
Councillor Alan Sharp  
Councillor Jo Webber

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Jo Brooks – Director, Operations  
Nigel Harper – Senior Building Control Surveyor  
John Hill – Chief Executive  
Liz Knox – Environmental Services Manager  
Angela Parmenter – Housing & Community Safety Manager  
Andy Radford – Director, Resources  
Adrian Scaites-Stokes – Democratic Services Officer  
Hetty Thornton – Performance Management Officer  
Dave White – Waste Services Team Leader

6. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions received from members of the public.

7. **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Christine Ambrose Smith, David Ambrose Smith, Neil Hitchin and Carol Sennitt.

8. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

9. **MINUTES**

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

## 10. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman made the following announcements:

- There were currently around 1150 people living with dementia in East Cambridgeshire. As numbers of people living with dementia is predicted to rise it is important that we take action now to support anyone affected by dementia to live well in the community. ECDC deal with customers on the telephone, face to face, at the Council offices, in the community, in people's homes and via the website. It is important that our staff are responsive to the needs of all our customers. We want our staff to understand dementia and to be able to provide the best service possible for people living with dementia and their carers. East Cambridgeshire Dementia Action Alliance was set up in March 2016. The Council was one of the first organisations to join the alliance. Since joining we have had 2 members of staff trained as Dementia Champions who will be rolling out Dementia Friends information/training sessions to frontline staff (and Members if they wish). We will also consider what other action we can take to help people living with dementia and their carers. The aim of the Alliance was to work towards creating a recognized Dementia Friendly Community in East Cambridgeshire.
- With reference to agenda item number 14, this would be brought forward for consideration next, with the agreement of the Committee.
- With reference to agenda item number 16, the Chief Executive had requested that this exempt item be deferred to the next meeting to enable him to further quantify and evaluate all the options available to Members for the future delivery of the service including a robust renegotiation of an extension to the current contract. It will also allow, in consultation with the Chairman, to review the current specification in light of Member consideration of agenda item 14.

## 11. **DRAFT COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY**

The Committee received a report (R20, previously circulated) which presented the draft Communications Strategy 2016-2019.

The Chief Executive advised the Committee that the Strategy was a work in progress. Discussions by Members would help evaluate the future delivery of the service and this issue would come back to the Committee at its next meeting. The Strategy would be the overarching document, with the Action Plan at the second level and detailed work below that.

Appendix 1 to the report demonstrated how the Council intended to communicate with its stakeholders through a developing methodology. A couple of examples had been included as Appendices 2 and 3. Appendix 2 related to working on the corporate priorities and an annual programme. This would include emerging ideas and would change as the Council's priorities changed or progressed.

Appendix 3 provided worked examples relating to specific issues and detailed the work done regarding Barton Road in Ely and the recent Police and Crime Commissioner election. The Council was seeking to communicate more effectively over its ongoing plans for Barton Road, particularly over the impact on parking and coach parking. The Commissioner election had been completed and, as this Council had been responsible for communications across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, Appendix 3B detailed the activities undertaken.

Councillor Peter Cresswell wanted to contribute but thought this might have to be in private session. The Committee adjourned at 4:42pm so Councillor Cresswell could seek advice from the Chief Executive.

The meeting re-convened at 4:44pm and Councillor Cresswell stated his view had been expressed outside of the meeting but there was nothing further to report.

Councillor Mike Bradley thought the issue was about how the Council executed its communication strategy.

Councillor Anna Bailey had found it frustrating that communications was hampered during the Purdah periods in the lead up to elections. The rules were open to interpretation so it would be helpful to include a statement about the Council's view. This would help people understand how the Council approached that subject. The Action Plan was the most important part of the Strategy and the proposed template was very pleasing.

It was resolved:

That the Communications Strategy 2016/2019 as detailed in Appendix 1 be approved subject to authorising the Chief Executive to make minor amendments in liaison with the Chairman of the Committee.

## 12. **INCREASED CAPITAL FUNDING FOR MANDATORY DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS**

The Committee received a report (R14, previously circulated) which advised of increased capital funding for mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) and sought approval for additional administrative resource to process the increased workload.

The Environmental Services Manager advised the Committee that the grant allocation for 2016/17 would be increased by around £200,000 for DFGs. This would enable more DFGs to be approved, more work to be done and a subsequent reduction in the list of residents waiting. It was anticipated that around 90 jobs could be done over the year, an increase from around 60. To allow Care and Repair to deal with this extra work it would need more administrative support. This would be for a fixed term of twelve months and would result in an increase in fees received.

Currently Occupational Therapists assessed case and prescribed them as either 'urgent' or 'routine'. Generally children or disabled people's cases were given an 'urgent' designation and these had a tendency to 'leapfrog' over other people on the list. The Council operated its own list as well, to prevent people on the list with a 'routine' case having to wait any longer than necessary.

Councillor Anna Bailey considered this an important area and was pleased this had come forward. It was noted that priorities for cases were set externally and this caused some issues.

The Chairman then read a statement submitted by Councillor Carol Sennitt: There has been an increase in funding for DFGs which has been much needed for a long time. There has, however, been a high increase in demand over the last 18 months resulting in a backlog. As a result, it has been requested that additional admin staff are needed to cope with this demand. I hope the Committee will support this.

Councillor Mike Bradley was confused by the figures quoted in the report, as they did not match up and there were differences. The Environmental Services Manager acknowledged that they were arithmetically inaccurate but might be the result of additional capital funding being allocated during the financial year that had not been shown. The Committee were assured that there would be a £81,000 income during 2016/17, which would be enough to cover the additional administration needed.

Councillor Sue Austen asked whether this administration would be instead of a case worker post and whether the fixed term meant finishing at the end of the year. The Environmental Services Manager explained that the department were interviewing the following day to fill the vacancy of case worker and the administration post would be in addition. The new post would help increase work through the Domestic Section of the department as part of its job. The fixed term would only initially be for 12 months. This could depend on the outcome of a DFG review being undertaken with the County Council, which would look at the way in which the money was spent, look at the options available and sought to understand future requirements.

Councillor Jo Webber questioned whether the department would look to fill the new post internally first and whether it would consider a secondment from another department. The Committee were informed that advertising new posts internally was done initially.

Councillor Anna Bailey wanted to know how many applications were made annually for DFGs and hoped the additional funding would assist everybody requiring help to be dealt with quickly. The Environmental Services Manager stated that there were currently around 147 outstanding applications, including those whose jobs were waiting. Even with the additional funding, although it would help shorten the waiting list, there would still be a shortfall, so other ways of working would be considered to help alleviate the problem. Central Government had recognised the problem and that it would be better for people to remain in their own homes.

It was resolved:

That the increased capital allocation for DFGs through the Better Care Fund be noted and that a small proportion of the increased revenue from fees be used to recruit a part time, fixed term administrative officer to facilitate the additional DFGs that will be generated by the additional grant funding.

### 13. **HEALTH AND WELLBEING EVENT**

The Committee received a report (R15, previously circulated) which informed the Committee of a proposed Health and Wellbeing Event to be held in Ely.

The Environmental Services Manager advised the Committee that in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy there was a requirement to review further development of health and wellbeing. At a workshop it had been agreed to hold an event and a steering group had met to help deliver it. The event would cost £14,000 and the County Council would contribute £1,000. Sponsorship was also being sought and a request was being made to this Council to contribute £2,000 from the existing budget.

Health in East Cambridgeshire was generally good but, with an aging population, people needed encouraging to take steps to remain healthy. The event would help support that strategy.

The Chairman then read a statement submitted by Councillor Carol Sennitt: I would like to recommend the health and wellbeing day that has been put forward to be held in Ely by Liz and her team. I hope the Committee will agree that this is a great opportunity to promote health and I also hope that you will agree to support this day financially.

Councillor Mike Bradley thought it was a good idea but queried what other calls on the budget had been made. The Committee was informed that this issue was the only one so far making a bid for funding from that budget.

Councillor Alan Sharp considered the idea good but wanted to know how it could be quantified as a success and how people living in the south of the district would be encouraged to look after their health. The Environmental Services Manager stated that Everyone Active, who would be involved in the event, looked at health checks and who had taken this up following the event. The stallholders would promote the services they provided and would gather data from the people attending. This data could then be followed up.

Councillor Peter Cresswell hoped this event would be a success and that a follow up could be held in the south of the district, possibly in partnership with West Suffolk Council.

Councillor Jo Webber asked about Everyone Active, as there was some concern about this organisation. The Environmental Services Manager explained that the organisation was having difficulty recruiting people to help

and hold some of their sessions. The Council would be training up some 'health champions' later this month, which could help.

It was resolved:

That £2000 funding be committed from the £10,000 allocated within the Environmental Services Budget towards a Health and Wellbeing event.

#### 14. **WASTE SERVICE REVIEW OPTIONS**

The Committee received a report (R16, previously circulated) which sought approval for the establishment of a review of waste service delivery options beyond the Council's current contract term.

The Waste Services Team Leader advised the Committee that the review would look at the format of the service and consider how it could be delivered in the future. The Council had taken up the option of a final year in addition to the current contract, which had two years to run. The best value for future service provision had to be considered and this could take eighteen months to complete, so the process had to be started now. Any options for the future service would lead to a substantial cost increase. It was recommended to set up a Member working party to undertake the review.

Councillor Jo Webber thought it was essential that this work was done now and hoped that the issues over food waste would be addressed during the review. Councillor Anna Bailey agreed that the work needed to commence immediately. Councillor Julia Huffer did not think the final year option with the current contractor should be taken up.

The Committee agreed to the set up of the Working Party with Councillors Sue Austen, Steve Cheetham and Julia Huffer as its Members.

It was resolved:

- (i) That the establishment of a Waste Services Review Working Party comprising 3 Members of the Council (2 Conservative and 1 Liberal Democrat) to consider options for waste service delivery beyond the current contract term to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 (as defined in Appendix 1) be agreed and the Members of the Working Party be Councillors Sue Austen, Steve Cheetham and Julia Huffer;
- (ii) That it be requested that the Working Party detail the options and recommendations and present them to the meeting of this Committee of 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2017;
- (iii) That the recommendations of this Committee be taken to the Full Council meeting of 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2017 for final agreement.

15. **DOORSTEP RECYCLING SURVEY**

The Committee received a report (R17, previously circulated) which informed the Committee about the implementation of a doorstep recycling survey.

The Waste Services Team Leader advised the Committee that a survey would be undertaken throughout the district during July to October. It would also be available via the Council's website, in Reception and sent to the parishes. If people were out when officers called then another leaflet may be produced which could be left behind. The results of the survey would be reported back.

This survey followed on from previous work started after the award of a Government grant. This work aimed to encourage participation in recycling and keeping contamination down. The plan was to use a single officer for the work to make it self-sufficient through increased recycling income. Unfortunately the value of recycling had plummeted so one officer had not been enough. Therefore three had been employed and were asked to provide added value.

Councillor Anna Bailey reminded the Committee that the Council's recycling performance had reached 57%, an achievement which had been hard-fought for. However, more people needed to comply and those using higher level of black bags should be targeted.

Councillor Jo Webber suggested the parishes could be sent a link to the Council's website, so they could add it to theirs. With reference to the questionnaire, it was also suggested that the words "brown paper sack" should be used to clarify which bag it referred to.

Councillor Mike Bradley noted that the paper sacks did not count towards the recycling target and thought that people should be encouraged to provide 'clean' bins to help with the quality of the recycle materials collected.

It was resolved:

That the introduction of a doorstep recycling survey be noted.

16. **END OF YEAR REPORTING AND NEW SERVICE PLANS**

The Committee received a report (R18, previously circulated) which considered the end of year reports and new service delivery plans for a number of Council services.

The Performance Management Officer advised the Committee that the report assessed the outputs from last year and set out the Service Delivery Plans for next year. Successes had been highlighted and a focus had been made on the corporate priorities. The highlights included: Building Control had achieved self-sufficiency despite staffing issues; Environmental Services had provided a high number of disabled adaptations; Licensing had reviews its fees and charges and had dealt with over two hundred temporary events; Housing had prevented around three hundred and fifty families from becoming homeless; the Performance Management Officer had assisted all services.

### Environmental Services

The Environmental Services Manager thought her teams had done brilliantly over the last year.

Care & Repair had managed to deliver sixty-two disabled facilities grant work in the past year, above the target of fifty, with a subsequent increase in fee income. This had been achieved with reduced staffing levels, so the team should be commended.

A high level of food business inspections had been maintained against a background of staffing issues. There was now a full complement of staff. That section had also been successful with one prosecution which, although it had taken some time and resources, had not impacted on the overall performance.

A business premises survey had been undertaken to gauge what businesses wanted from the Council. Improved information on the website and further assistance to help them improve were two of the main outcomes. A training course had been held for publicans to help them improve their businesses, particularly of hygiene. Of the eleven that had attended the course, nine had improved with the consequent improvement of the health of their clients.

The new Service Delivery Plan introduced two new targets. These were to investigate and sell technical advice, and to support food businesses and running a further seminar, for which a charge would be made. Also introduced was a review of the enforcement policies of the Domestic Section and fee charging for immigration housing inspections.

Councillor Anna Bailey thought a target could be set after six months, following the review, for technical advice fees.

Councillor Jo Webber asked about food establishments displaying their star ratings. The Environmental Services Manager stated that it was not compulsory for them to display the ratings. The ratings were available on the Council's website. A lot of the rules for them were very prescriptive and were being reviewed by the Food Standards Agency.

### Licensing

The Environmental Services Manager reminded the Committee that Licensing had been retained in-house and a new senior officer, Stewart Broome, had been appointed. This had led to an increase in income from street trading, following an update to the relevant policy. Measures for taxi licensing had been re-negotiated after a comprehensive consultation with the trade. This had helped the relationship between the Council and the taxi trade improve significantly. New targets had been set for 2016/17 for new animal licences and annual inspection of taxi company bases. Some policies would also need updating.

Councillor Sue Austin thought the Licensing Section had worked wonders and the taxi trade in particular were a lot happier. This was due to the work of Stewart Broome who should be complimented.

Councillor Mike Bradley asked when the Licensing Section would break even. The Environmental Services Officer explained that the level of fees and charges made had been looked at. To break even immediately would have meant a substantial increase in those fees and charges, which would not have been fair on the people involved. Therefore a five-year plan with an incremental approach had been taken so that the right levels would be reached after that time.

#### Housing Options

Housing & Community Safety Manager advised the Committee that the team had managed to prevent three hundred and thirty households becoming homeless and 60% of those households had gone into the private sector. The team had also been successful with providing thirteen 'crash pads' for young people on a temporary basis. Six of them had returned home and six had gone into supported accommodation. Rough sleepers had been helped in conjunction with the Lighthouse Centre and they were usually found accommodation within 48 hours.

A Peer Review had been carried out and the results were awaited. It was expected that this Council would be held up for 'best practice' on a number of issues and was on target to receive the 'Gold Standard'.

Councillor Anna Bailey was unbelievably proud of the Housing team's performance, as it had a very important role and this had not been easy.

Councillor Mike Bradley acknowledged that the team's performance had saved the Council money but questioned whether a figure could be given and thought this should be included in the report. The Housing & Community Safety Manager reminded the Committee that the cost of providing bed-and-breakfast for homeless families had previously cost £500,000 over a six month period.

Councillor Alan Sharp thought the engagement with private landlords had been excellent and had helped the homelessness issue.

#### Building Control

The Senior Building Control Surveyor advised the Committee that it had been a challenging yet successful year, as the targets within the Service Delivery Plan had been delivered. This was the first year when Building Control had produced a surplus, in the region of £30,000 to £50,000.

During the last year the Team Leader had left the section and another officer had taken over temporarily. That had become permanent but the officer had become ill. This meant that the team only had three officers working out a full complement of five but had received support from the Director, Operations.

The team had achieved some notable successes by securing jobs for the new cinema, a new brewery and a new building in Lancaster Way. It was hoped more jobs could be secured so the future looked rosy. However, there were significant challenges to face. The building control industry was changing both nationally and locally. Local authorities around East Cambridgeshire had been

joining together to make larger teams, so this district was surrounded. The Council may have to decide whether to continue on its own or seek something different.

The second serious challenge related to the retention and recruitment of staff. This was very difficult due to the lack of people available, as inspectors were highly valued, so local authorities were competing for their services by reviewing the level of salaries they offered. Fortunately the Council had a very dedicated team but had to ensure that they were retained, as it would be extremely difficult to replace anyone.

Councillor Anna Bailey acknowledged that this problem needed serious consideration. This also needed to be addressed through the Service Delivery Plan.

Councillor Mike Bradley asked how much the service cost. The Committee was informed that it was around £240,000 to £250,000 per year.

Councillor Jo Webber had used the Council's Building Control service, which was a very trusted service and was recommended by architects. The Council did not want to lose this service. If the team was at its full complement it should consider selling the warranty service better.

Councillor Peter Cresswell complimented the officer on the open way he had explained the situation regarding the service. This definitely needed to be looked at as a priority.

#### Performance Management

The Performance Management Officer had focussed on engaging staff last year and had supported Service Leads during the workshops held. Attempts had been made to align the performance reporting cycle with the planning business cycle and now with the staff appraisal cycle.

Next year the focus would be on promoting to the public the good things the Council was doing, linking the systems service-by-service and on customer needs.

It was resolved:

- (i) That the end of year performance reports (2015-2016) including any variances, which will be highlighted in each Service Delivery Plan, be noted;
- (ii) That the new Service Delivery Plans for the above services, noting emergency projects and challenges moving forward, be agreed.

### **17. REVIEW OF THE TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME AND ICT SERVICE**

The Committee received a report (R19, previously circulated) which reviewed and refined the transformation Programme so that it was resourced and deliverable with outcomes defined.

The Director, Resources advised the Committee that he had picked up this Programme back in April and had not been convinced about Programme's focus, as there was too much wanted to be done. Therefore a review had been completed by a consultant. Three key areas had been pulled out from the review and the Programme would be completed in two phases. The first phase would be what could be achieved within the next six months. This would include a new Council website, a learning and improving programme, and getting the foundations right for an efficient business.

From the procurement point of view, if something could be done quickly then it would be done, as it would be the pragmatic thing to do. Existing resources would be used wherever possible. Phase 2 would involve bigger costs.

Councillor Anna Bailey noted that this was a complex area and it was a struggle to understand the details, though working with the consultants had given some confidence. The programme was about fundamental matters and was what the Council should do. The work projects identified by the Performance Management Officer would continue as well, but would be given a different priority.

Councillor Mike Bradley was concerned about how Council money would be spent. This should need Member approval, as spending needed a 'sanity check', because the Council did not want to waste money. The Council now had a strategy and the programme should be given priority in accordance with it.

It was resolved:

- (i) That the review of the Transformational Programme be noted;
- (ii) That the priority projects described in section 4 of the report be noted;
- (iii) That the Programme Management and reporting arrangements as set out in section 5 of the report be noted;
- (iv) That the release of the funding in the ICT Reserve be noted.

#### 18. **TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES**

The Committee considered the minutes of the Transformation Programme Sub-Committee meeting of 12<sup>th</sup> May 2016.

The minutes of the Sub-Committee were noted.

#### 19. **FORWARD AGENDA PLAN**

The Committee received its Forward Agenda Plan.

The Chairman advised the Committee of a number of changes to the forward agenda plan:

- 27<sup>th</sup> June 2016 – Future Delivery of the Communication and Public Relations Service deferred from this meeting;
- 27<sup>th</sup> July 2016 – LA Pay Comparison & National Living Wage Implementation item moved from 27<sup>th</sup> June 2016;
- 27<sup>th</sup> July 2016 – Performance Related Increments Scheme – Annual Update item moved from 27<sup>th</sup> June 2016.

The forward agenda was noted, with a number of minor changes.

The meeting closed at 6.38pm

DRAFT