

## **Executive Councillor Records of Decision and Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee Minutes**

**17:00 - 20:35**

### **PRESENT:**

#### **Executive Councillors:**

The Leader: Councillor Ian Nimmo-Smith

Executive Councillor for Customer Services and Resources: Rod Cantrill

#### **Scrutiny Committee:**

Councillors Bick, Blackhurst, Ellis-Miller, Herbert (Labour Spokesperson for Strategy), Howell, Shah, Taylor (Chair) and Ward

### **09/SR/15 Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of 19 January 2009 were signed by the Chair as a correct record.

The Committee were informed that Item 15 (Safer City Grants – Ravensworth Gardens) had been removed from the agenda in order for more information to be obtained prior to a decision being made. The report would be brought back to a future Scrutiny Committee Meeting.

### **09/SR/16 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillors Dryden and Newbold.

### **09/SR/17 Declarations of Interest**

None

### **09/SR/18 Public Questions**

#### Agenda item 6 - Way Finding Pedestrian Signage Project

Mr Richard Taylor requested details of the independent retailer Representatives and highlighted the need for the Love Cambridge Partnership to be as open and transparent as possible. It was felt important that their meetings were open to the public and their website was fully accessible.

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The City Centre Manager confirmed that Love Cambridge would act as a custodian of the project and be responsible for the maintenance and replacement of the new signage. The selected representatives would act as advocates.

Mr John Carter was confirmed as the representative of the Independents Group and Ms Nicky Morrison as the Resident Advocate.

It was stated that the project had always been based on a partnership approach and its aim was to be as inclusive as possible – with broad engagement and a full consultation completed in May 2008. The Love Cambridge website would be launched on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009 with all members able to log on to discuss and share ideas.

The Executive Councillor for Customer Services and Resources confirmed that for openness and transparency the Partnership would be subject to a full audit process, despite it not being required by law. Quarterly meetings would be held with members and a formal report would be brought back to this Scrutiny Committee annually.

**09/SR/19      Re-let of Corporate Mobile Communications**  
*(Non-Key Decision - Agenda Item 5)*

**Matter for Decision:** Re-tendering of the Corporate Mobile Communications Contract

**Decision of Executive Councillor:** Approved the carrying out and completion of the procurement of Corporate Mobile phones. If the quotation or tender sum exceeded the estimated contract value by more than 15% the permission of the Executive Councillor and Director of Finance would be sought prior to proceeding.

**Reason for the Decision:** The Council's mobile phone provision (line rental, call charges and replacement handsets) was currently contracted to ISIS. In line with the Council's contract rules the contract had a fixed life and must be re-tendered periodically.

**Any alternative options considered and rejected:** N/A

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**Scrutiny Considerations:** In response to a question regarding mobile phone insurance the ICT Client Manager confirmed that, as replacement handsets were extremely cheap, the costings in the report did not include insurance.

Members questioned the Council's policy for identifying staff need for mobile communications and it was confirmed that all departments had been asked to review this and usage patterns had been identified on all mobiles. The Executive Councillor did remind Members that lone working and the Council's policy in terms of mobile and remote working had to be taken into account.

The ICT Client Manager confirmed that the tender process did give the flexibility to look into Blackberry usage and that, as the market was moving extremely quickly, the suggested '2 plus 2 years' contract gave the opportunity to reassess at the break point.

The Chair requested that the policy for 'Mobile Phone Assignment to Staff' be made available to Member's and brought to a future meeting. The ICT Manager agreed to take this forward.

The Scrutiny Committee considered and approved the recommendations by 6 votes to 0.

**Conflicts of interest declared by the Executive Councillor (and any dispensations granted):** None

**09/SR/20**                      **Way Finding Pedestrian Signage Project**  
(*Non-Key Decision - Agenda Item 6*)

**Matter for Decision:** Installation of 17 tablet style signs with maps and 27 finger posts delivered in partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council, and the private sector, with all partners contributing to its overall funding.

**Decision of Executive Councillor:** Approved the commencement of the project within the City Centre Management Programme, already included in the Council's Capital Plan, and the use of additional funds from S106. The capital cost of this project was £34,869, £21,000 of which was to be funded from the City Centre Management Capital Programme, and £13,869 from Section 106 monies in relation to the Grand Arcade. There were no revenue implications arising from the project.

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**Reason for the Decision:** To improve the linkage of all the key areas of the City; and, in particular, to improve the retail circuit through the City.

**Any alternative options considered and rejected:** N/A

**Scrutiny Considerations:** In response to Member's questions the City Centre Manager confirmed that whilst minor alterations in contrast and background had been made to make the signs more accessible for the visually impaired, very little needed to be changed as a result of the original consultation.

It was stated that the height of the signs was in line with other locations around the Country (Stratford, Bristol and London) and that no issues had been identified through the consultation. A certain height had also been recommended to avoid people hanging off the fingers of the signs and damaging them. The City Centre Manager agreed to email all Members a full list of agreed destinations for the signs and maps.

Whilst the scheme focused purely on the City Centre it did have the capacity to be added to at a later stage – subject to funding.

The Executive Councillor stated he welcomed the scheme and felt it was important for independent retailers as it gave visitors the confidence to explore the whole City and not just the main shopping areas. He also confirmed that as a result of the recent workshop it had been recognised that the blue signs did not work and more could be done to reduce street clutter.

The City Centre Manager confirmed that Officers had worked closely with all the independent retailers and the retail areas on the new maps had been extended as a result of their feedback. Wording on the signs had also been amended to better reflect the diversity of shopping areas.

It was confirmed that the Repairs and Renewals Fund would be managed by Love Cambridge and that the starting figure of £10,000 would be added to through sponsorship. The funds were ring fenced and could only be used for maintenance/replacement of the signage and maps.

The Scrutiny Committee considered and approved the recommendations by 6 votes to 0.

**Conflicts of interest declared by the Executive Councillor (and any dispensations granted):** None

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**09/SR/21            Implementation of Freedom Foods or equivalent  
Purchasing Standards**  
*(Non-Key Decision - Agenda Item 7)*

**Matter for Decision:** Consideration of the implications of the Council ending the purchase by it of fowl, eggs and related products whose production failed to meet RSPCA Freedom Food or equivalent standards and to scope the implementation of this measure in the provision of the Council's services

**Decision of Executive Councillor:**

- Confirmed the parameters for a policy to be applied to the Council's purchase of fowl, eggs and related items to reflect the Council's resolution of 21<sup>st</sup> February 2008.
- Instructed officers to consult with suppliers, users and interested Members to determine the cost and any other implications (including legal implications) of a policy regulating purchases of this type by the Council.
- To present a further report setting out the cost and other implications and a draft policy for approval.

**Reason for the Decision:** At its meeting on 21st February 2008 the Council resolved that: "The Council supports the switch to food production that respects and increases animal welfare." It was further resolved that, as a first stage, a report be brought to Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee to end the purchase or provision by the Council of fowl, battery eggs, and related products whose production fails to meet RSPCA Freedom Food or equivalent standards, for implementation by December 2008 following which the Council will write to contractors providing food on its premises and at its events advising them of the Council's policy and seeking their support.

**Any alternative options considered and rejected:** N/A

**Scrutiny Considerations:** Members welcomed progress on this issue and looked forward to seeing a further report setting out the cost implications.

The Scrutiny Committee considered and approved the recommendations by 8 votes to 0 (unanimous)

**Conflicts of interest declared by the Executive Councillor (and any dispensations granted):** None

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09/SR/22                    **Exclusion of press and the public**

Before considering the next 2 items the Chair asked that members of the public be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that, if they were present, there would be disclosure to them of information defined as exempt from publication by virtue of paragraph 1, 2 & 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

09/SR/23                    **Benefits Irrecoverable Debts to be written-off**  
*(Non-Key Decision - Agenda Item 9)*

**Matter for Decision:** Write-off of debt deemed irrecoverable.

**Decision of Executive Councillor:** Write-off of the debt deemed irrecoverable as shown in Appendix 'A' of the officers report.

**Reason for the Decision:** As set out in the officers report

**Any alternative options considered and rejected:** N/A

**Scrutiny Considerations:**

The Scrutiny Committee considered and approved the recommendations by 6 votes to 0.

**Conflicts of interest declared by the Executive Councillor (and any dispensations granted):** None

09/SR/24                    **General Debts – Bad Debts for write-off**  
*(Non-Key Decision - Agenda Item 10)*

**Matter for Decision:** Write-off of debts

**Decision of Executive Councillor:** Write-off of 3 debts as summarised in 'Appendix A' to the officers report.

**Reason for the Decision:** As set out in the officers report

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**Any alternative options considered and rejected:** N/A

**Scrutiny Considerations:** Members requested some further information from the Director of Finance regarding Council practice and procedure.

The Scrutiny Committee considered and approved the recommendations  
By 6 votes to 0.

**Conflicts of interest declared by the Executive Councillor (and any dispensations granted):** None

**09/SR/25                      Joining the WWF's 'Earth Hour 2009' Initiative**  
*(Agenda item 11)*

**Matter for Decision:** A proposal had been received through the Cambridgeshire Climate Change Partnership and from individuals in Cambridge that Cambridge City Council formally sign up to the WWF Earth Hour initiative. The Earth Hour objective was to encourage people throughout the world to switch off their lights between 20:30 and 21:30 (local time) on 28 March 2009. While the event clearly would not make a significant or lasting contribution to reduction of the city's carbon emission, it did create an opportunity for individuals and communities to communicate on and consider the issues of climate change.

**Decision of Leader:** Agreed to sign up Cambridge City Council to the 2009 WWF Earth Hour initiative and to work with officers to promote the initiative within the council and with partner organisations including Cambridge Local Strategic Partnership and Cambridgeshire Together.

**Reason for the Decision:** An opportunity for individuals and communities to communicate on and consider the issues of climate change.

**Any alternative options considered and rejected:** N/A

**Scrutiny Considerations:** In response to Member's questions the Leader confirmed that where possible, subject to security and public access issues, the Council would make sure that its own premises adhered to this. He did however emphasise that the main focus was for individual homes to take part.

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The Leader agreed that further information would be added to the Council's website and that communication would be made with other Local Authorities and associated Partners to encourage them to get involved.

A Member stated that it was merely a gimmick and would not solve the issue of climate change, whilst another Member stated that the burglary rate should be monitored during this time.

The Executive Councillor for Customer Services and Resources informed the Committee that many new technologies such as movement sensitive lighting were incorporated in the new Customer Service Centre in order to manage light usage.

The Scrutiny Committee considered and approved the recommendations by 6 votes to 0.

**Conflicts of interest declared by the Executive Councillor (and any dispensations granted):** None

**09/SR/25                      Big Plan 2 – Review of Services for Children and  
Young People in Cambridgeshire 2009-2012**  
*(Key Decision - Agenda Item 12)*

**Matter for Decision:** Approval of the Cambridgeshire's Children and Young People's Plan for 2009 – 2012, Big Plan 2, which establishes priorities and actions for partners working together to improve outcomes for children and young people across the County.

**Decision of Leader:**

- Approved Big Plan 2, Cambridgeshire's Children and Young People's Plan for 2009 – 2012, subject to matters raised by members being forwarded to the County Council Cabinet for consideration

**Reason for the Decision:** The current plan ends in April 2009 and all local authorities and partners have the statutory duty to produce a Children and Young People's Plan.

**Any alternative options considered and rejected:** N/A

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**Scrutiny Considerations:** Member attention was drawn to the updated 'Big Plan 2' document as circulated on 6<sup>th</sup> March.

In response to concerns raised that the document did not seem to start with needs of the children but was simply a strategy drawn up by officers, the Head of Community Development stated that children and young people had been involved in the review and development of the Big Plan and that a Participation Group (supported by the County Council, City Council and voluntary sector) would be identifying further ways for young people to get involved. It was acknowledged that there were still gaps in particular in the priority around growth and demographic change and that more detail would be included in the action plans that were due to be delivered in May 2009. These would be shared with Members in due course.

With regard to tackling discrimination and bullying, the Head of Community Development confirmed that a specific Bullying Strategy had been developed throughout the County over the past 3 years but still required further work in order to fully address the issue outside of schools and in the wider community.

Members commented that the Partnership needed to identify more clearly ways in which Central Government policy could help them to achieve their goals.

A concern was raised about whether or not the needs of new and emerging communities were adequately reflected in the Plan. The Head of Community Development responded by referring to sections in the Plan where action was being developed and informed the Committee about steps being taken to promote Community Cohesion by the Cambridge Local Strategic Partnership.

The Scrutiny Committee considered and approved the recommendations by 6 votes to 0.

**Conflicts of interest declared by the Executive Councillor (and any dispensations granted):** None

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**09/SR/26**                    **Additional Item: Local Area Agreement (LAA) –  
2009 Refresh of Agreement**  
*(Non-Key Decision – Second Circulation Item 1)*

**Matter for Decision:** The LAA was a three-year agreement that set out the priorities for a local area agreement between Central Government and local Council's and their partners. Cambridgeshire Together needed to agree the final refreshed agreement at a meeting on 20 March 2009 so the Scrutiny Committee had an opportunity to give any comments to the Leader on content before he attended that meeting.

**Decision of Executive Councillor:** To take into consideration Committee's comments (below) on the refreshed proposals when discussing this item at the meeting of Cambridgeshire Together on 20 March 2009.

**Reason for the Decision:** The Cambridgeshire Agreement had been agreed in June 2008 and was now due for its annual "refresh".

**Any alternative options considered and rejected:** N/A

**Scrutiny Considerations:** A Member of the Joint Accountability Committee assured colleagues that this body did continually monitor and question the LAA process.

The Scrutiny Committee considered and approved the recommendations by 6 votes to 0.

**Conflicts of interest declared by the Executive Councillor (and any dispensations granted):** None

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**09/SR/27**                      **Safer Neighbourhoods – City Council Involvement**  
*(Non-Key Decision - Agenda Item 13)*

**Matter for Decision:** Review of Safer Neighbourhood processes, resource implications and outcomes of the project.

**Decision of Leader:**

- Confirmed continued support for Safer Neighbourhoods\* at Area Committee meetings now it is core business across the City.
  - Endorsed the following amended areas for further development (below) and acknowledge that the Policing Pledge be taken into account and monitored in the implementation of Safer Neighbourhoods\*
- 1) Effective promotion and publicity of both the Safer Neighbourhoods\* item and the priorities/work programmes set by the NAG.
  - 2) Review of format and structure of the Safer Neighbourhood\* item.  
A meeting suggested between Area Committee Chairs, Safer Community Officers and Police Representatives to discuss time allowance, Chairs introduction and agenda listing.
  - 3) \*To alleviate confusion and encourage members of the public to get involved the Partnership should consider changing the name of the item back to *Neighbourhood Policing*.
  - 4) Review of crime recording and reporting systems to ensure that all incidents of crime and antisocial behaviour were captured adequately and fed into the Neighbourhood Policing item.
  - 5) Consider how the views of hard to reach groups can feed into the Safer Neighbourhood process at Area Committees.

Hard to reach groups: an over emphasis was placed on the views of those that attend Area Committees so considering views from other forums was important.

**Reason for the Decision:** As set out in the officers report and below.

**Any alternative options considered and rejected:** N/A

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### **Scrutiny Considerations:**

Councillor Blackhurst tabled the following amendment to recommendation 2 of the Officers Report:

Delete all and replace with:

- *Endorsed the following amended areas for further development and suggested that the Policing Pledge be taken into account and monitored in the implementation of Safer Neighbourhoods\**

The amendment was carried by 7 votes to 0

Members emphasised the need for Area Committees to remain flexible and cater for the wide range of partners that wish to contribute at them. Concern was raised that fixed times be set on the agenda for the Police item may hinder this flexibility, which remained a benefit of the structure.

Members discussed the need for more clarity regarding the baselines upon which the Police priorities are fixed. The public needed to understand, in practical terms, what 'extra' activities happened when a topic was added to the priorities list, and what 'ongoing' activities happened with those removed from the list. It was also suggested that the feedback loop and reporting back mechanisms needed improving.

Members felt that Neighbourhood Policing had seen vast improvements in the last few years and thanked Officers and Partners for all their hard work in this area. It was felt that engagement between the Police, Councillors and the public in general was greatly improved.

A Member did however raise concern that only a very small number of the community attended area Committees, and those regular attendees were active in the community and already well empowered. It was agreed that increased promotion of the meetings was essential to engage with a wider range of the public, and that a way to engage with those unable to attend evening meetings should be looked into.

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The Chair highlighted the need for improved links between the Area Committees and the Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGs), and suggested that cross membership be explored by officers.

In response to a question regarding the role of Neighbourhood Watch (NW), the Strategy Officer confirmed that dedicated Police Officers were in place to work with NW Co-ordinators. It was however acknowledged that more work could be done to gain their views prior to Area Committees and the setting of priorities.

Councillor Howell tabled the following amendment to the 'Areas for Further Development' section (as noted in 3.10 of the Officers Report):

Delete bullet point 3 and replace with:

- *To alleviate confusion and encourage members of the public to get involved the Partnership should consider changing the name of the item back to Neighbourhood Policing.*

The amendment was carried by 5 votes to 2

Councillor Howell tabled the following amendment to the 'Areas for further development' section (as noted in 3.10 of the Officers Report):

Inclusion of additional bullet point

- *Review of crime recording and reporting systems to ensure that all incidents of crime and antisocial behaviour were captured adequately and fed into the Neighbourhood Policing item.*

The amendment was carried by 3 votes to 0

In response to this amendment the Strategy Officer did confirm that a meeting was being arranged with Councillor Howell to further examine how crime recording and reporting systems operated.

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Councillor Nimmo-Smith tabled the following amendment to the 'Areas for further development' section (as noted in 3.10 of the Officers Report):

Delete bullet point 2 and replace with:

- *Review of format and structure of the Safer Neighbourhood\* item. A meeting suggested between Area Committee Chairs, Safer Community Officers and Police Representatives to discuss time allowance, Chairs introduction and agenda listing.*

The amendment was carried by 8 votes to 0 (unanimous)

The Scrutiny Committee considered and approved the amended recommendations by 8 votes to 0 (unanimous)

**Conflicts of interest declared by the Executive Councillor (and any dispensations granted):** None

09/SR/28

**Sustainable Communities Act 2007 –  
Possible Proposals**  
*(Non-Key Decision - Agenda Item 14)*

**Matter for Decision:** To consider in more depth, with a “panel of representatives of local people”, a shortlist of ideas (from the 150 ideas generated by a successful workshop with community representatives and elected Members).

**Decision of Leader:**

Agreed:

- That the following short list of potential proposals identified by the Scrutiny Committee be taken forward with the “panel of representatives of local people” in the context of the longer list and the report of the workshop:
    - 9) *Change current legislation to allow the local authority to keep all revenues from council house rents for the improvement and new build of council houses in that authority.*
    - 2) *Give the Council the power to ban the use of plastic bags or ban free plastic bags in shops – charge to deter their use.*
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*7) Give Cambridge City Council Integrated Transport Authority powers under the Transport Act to secure better regulated public transport.*

*5) Return traffic planning to the City Council. Local areas to enact their own traffic restrictions (assumes existing funding stream also moves)*

- To discuss with Executive Councillors ideas from the workshop, outside of the short list, to assess their feasibility.

**Reason for the Decision:** As set out in the officers report and below.

**Any alternative options considered and rejected:** N/A

**Scrutiny Considerations:** Members discussed and asked officers advice on the practicalities of each potential proposal as listed in the report. It was suggested that the Post Office idea as noted in Appendix 1 of the officers report could be worthy of further investigation.

Through a system of Members votes a short list of 4 potential proposals was agreed (as above)

The Scrutiny Committee considered and approved the amended recommendations by 8 votes to 0 (unanimous)

**Conflicts of interest declared by the Executive Councillor (and any dispensations granted):** None

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