



MEETING OF THE CABINET
9 JANUARY 2006 - 10.30 AM – 12.32 PM

PRESENT:

Councillor Teri Bryant
Councillor Ray Auger
Councillor Paul Carpenter
Councillor Mrs Frances Cartwright
Councillor John Smith

Councillor Mrs. Linda Neal – Leader / Chairman

Chief Executive
Director of Finance and Strategic Resources
Director of Regulatory Services
Director of Community Services
Corporate Manager, Democratic & Legal Services
Head of Waste & Contract Services
Head of Planning Policy & Economic Regeneration
Revenues Manager
Member Services Manager
Sustainable Waste Management Policy Officer
Public Relations Consultant

Non- Cabinet Members :
Councillors Craft ; Kerr ; G. Taylor ; G. Wheat ;
Wilks

CO103. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 5th December 2005 were confirmed as a correct record.

CO104. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Corporate Manager, Democratic and Legal Services had been asked to attend the meeting to clarify the position on declarations of interest in relation to the item on the review of the Discretionary Rate Relief Scheme.

He had sought advice from the Standards Board on this issue. In effect, for those Councillors who had been appointed by the Council as a representative on an outside body, where general matters of policy were being discussed they should declare a personal interest but not a prejudicial one. Councillors in this position could claim exemption and still take part in the discussion and voting even in relation to the organisation on which they sat provided the issue related to policy and its application.

In the light of this advice, the following interests were declared.

Minute CO111: Review of Discretionary Rate Relief Scheme:

Councillor Auger: personal interest by virtue of him being co-opted as a ward member on the Deepings United Charities but not appointed by the District Council.

Councillor Bryant: personal interest by virtue of sitting on a number of organisations potentially affected by the revised scheme.

Councillor Carpenter: personal interest by virtue of being a school governor appointed by the Lincolnshire County Council.

Councillor Mrs Cartwright: personal interest by virtue of being a trustee of Aslackby Village Hall not appointed by the Council.

Councillor Mrs Neal: personal interest by virtue of being a school governor not appointed by the Council.

Councillor Smith: personal interest by being a trustee of Bourne United Charities, a school governor and a representative (not appointed by the Council) on a number of organisations potentially affected by the scheme.

John Pell, Director of Community Services: personal interest by virtue of him being a chairman of a school governing body.

CO105. STAMFORD GATEWAY SCHEME

DECISION:

- (1) That part (2) of minute CO78 relating to a contribution from the Stamford Town Council be deleted and that the District Council proceeds with its contribution towards the scheme;**
- (2) The payment of the District Council's contribution in three instalments of 40%, 40% and 20% to be linked in with the three main components of the scheme being Sheep Market North, Red Lion Square, and Sheep Market South. These three components**

to be considered the specified outcomes to be delivered; the second 40% of funding to be payable upon satisfactory completion of the Sheep Market North component;

(3) The other outcomes to be fulfilled are:

- (i) during implementation, the satisfaction of the Highways Authority on the running of the project to be achieved;
- (ii) engaging the community in art workshops;
- (iii) delivering the phases on time and to budget;
- (iv) selecting and maintaining a quality standard of workmanship in all phases with positive ongoing feedback from the businesses and communities as to disruption minimisation by the contractor;
- (v) on completion, success to be measured by national recognition, increased footfall, positive post-evaluation by the residents, particularly in the quality of the environment, impact of the artwork, improved responses in the business survey, greater use of Red Lion Square for events, positive feedback from funding bodies, and reduction in accidents;

(4) Noting that both the Economic Portfolio Holder and the Resources & Assets Portfolio Holder are satisfied with the design of the scheme and the liabilities and responsibilities likely to accrue to this Council have largely been resolved, subject to a small number of issues to be discussed by the Portfolio Holders;

(5) Noting the scheme has been prioritised and allows for maximum flexibility in adjusting the scope of the works to suit the contract sum. Therefore no further financial assistance will be forthcoming from the District Council.

Considerations/Reasons for Decision:

- (1) Report number PLA549 by the Head of Planning Policy & Economic Regeneration referring to the Cabinet's previous decision on 7th November 2005 to contribute £350,000 towards the Stamford Gateway public realm scheme, subject to a number of outcomes;
- (2) The Stamford Town Council were invited to contribute towards the scheme but at its meeting held on 13th December 2005 declined to do so although supported the project in principle;
- (3) Having regard to support for the scheme expressed earlier in 2005 by the Stamford Town Council, results of local consultation with the public and all those affected by the scheme also showing support, evaluation of the scheme by the Welland SSP, Lincolnshire County Council, SKDC, the Arts Council, and the East Midlands Tourist Board all being positive, the District Council still proceeds with the scheme in the light of the response from the Stamford Town Council subject to the outcomes specified;
- (4) Noting the outcome from an informal meeting between the Cabinet and members of the Stamford Town Council;
- (5) The scheme is a category A priority and accords with the majority views expressed by the local community.

[Before reaching its formal decision on this item the Cabinet adjourned for five minutes between 10.55am and 11.00am.]

CO106. WASTE MANAGEMENT: ALTERNATE WEEKLY COLLECTION CONSULTATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

DECISION:

- (1) To proceed with the introduction of an alternate weekly waste collection system using wheeled bins throughout the whole district council area, as outlined in appendix B2 to report WCS10;**
- (2) To implement the rollout of the system in a phased approach, beginning in September 2006, ending September 2007, subject to the Healthy Environment Portfolio Holder approving any variation due to circumstances.**

Considerations/Reasons for Decision:

- (1) Report number WCS10 by the Head of Waste & Contract Services concerning the results of a recent consultation exercise on the proposed introduction of an alternate weekly waste collection service throughout the District;
- (2) Outcome from the feedback received indicates that the residents of south Kesteven would like to see wheeled bins introduced for both refuse and recycling collections. The outcome of the consultation accords with the conclusions reached by the working group set up by the Healthy Environment DSP. The Cabinet received comments from the Chairman of the Working Group at the meeting;
- (3) It is acknowledged that there are areas where wheeled bins would be unsuitable. It has always been a recognised factor that some properties would be exempt from this collection method and a policy on exempt properties would be required;
- (4) A phased-in approach is preferred, implementing the scheme round by round. The advantages of this approach is outlined in report WCS10;
- (5) Noting the emphasis on continuing and future consultation with residents to ensure that they are well informed, individually if necessary;
- (6) The Portfolio Holder has delegated responsibility to make any variation to the phased introduction of the scheme where necessary in the light of experience;
- (7) It is recognised that sufficient resources should be included within the Revenue and Capital Programmes to implement this decision.

Other options considered and rejected: A “Big Bang” approach to implementation is rejected as this would be the least effective and successful. This approach could fail because:

- (1) It is estimated that distribution of bins would take approximately 6 months, and therefore some households would start using their bins long before collections are due to commence. This situation occurred with the introduction of the green waste scheme.
- (2) An integral part of introducing an alternate weekly collection scheme is publicity. It is recommended by all communication specialists to run publicity three weeks and one week before implementation. A lack of resources would make this impossible to cover the whole 365 square miles on this time frame.

CO107. BUDGET 2006/07 & 2007/08:

DECISION:

- (1) To note the impact of the provisional Local Government Settlement for 2006/07 and 2007/08;
- (2) To set a target General Fund budget requirement of £13.959m for 2006/07 with resultant Council Tax of £105.84 and to consider preparing indicative figures for 2007/08. These figures to be reviewed later in the budget process;
- (3) To ensure the Scale of Charges are reviewed as part of the Gateway Budget Review;
- (4) To agree in principle the rent proposals as set out in report FIN254 subject to consultation on the proposals taking place with the Tenant Compact;
- (5) To request further feedback on budget consultation from the Budget Working Party and public feedback from SKToday and the Local Area Assembly meetings in January, in time for its consideration of budget plans in February.

Considerations/Reasons for Decision:

- (1) Report number FIN254 by the Director of Finance and Strategic Resources which comments upon the provisional Local Government Settlement for 2006/07 and indicative settlement for 2007/08; the budget requirement and reserves; housing rents for 2006/07; and the scale of charges for individual services;
- (2) Advice from the Director of Finance and Strategic Resources on the relative position of South Kesteven's settlement compared to the national position and an explanation of the formulae changes for grant distribution;
- (3) Noting that whilst the East Midlands fared well from the 2006/07 settlement, South Kesteven's grant is the second lowest in Lincolnshire.

CO108. ALLOCATION OF INCOME FROM REDUCED DISCOUNT OF COUNCIL TAX ON SECOND HOMES

DECISION:

- (1) To approve the request to Lincolnshire County Council for a grant allocation from the additional income raised from council tax on second homes;**
- (2) To agree that the grant be allocated for use by the Local Strategic Partnership to assist the development of schemes and projects identified in the draft Community Plan 2006/07;**
- (3) To note that the grant in respect of 2005/06 will be paid alongside the payment for 2006/07.**

Considerations/Reasons for Decision:

- (1) Report number DCS37 by the Director of Community Services which refers to an opportunity to submit proposed schemes to Lincolnshire County Council for the use of additional income arising from the reduced discount of council tax on second homes. Such proposed schemes to be of mutual benefit to both the district concerned and the county;
- (2) Given the emphasis being placed on both tiers of local government to develop and promote excellence in partnership working and the increased importance being placed on Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) to deliver the outcomes of Local Area Agreements, the Lincolnshire County Council is asked to make a grant towards the development of the South Kesteven Local Strategic Partnership. The themes to be addressed by the LSP are also being addressed by the County Council. If the grant is approved, allocating funds to the LSP will facilitate a more integrated and coherent approach to project development and implementation.

Other options considered and assessed

- (1) In considering other options thought has been given to other mutually important priorities shared by the County Council and South Kesteven District Council. Themes such as community safety, economic development and support to the voluntary sector have been considered.
- (2) It is the case that many funding opportunities open to partnerships organisations are not available to local authorities. If this funding is made available to the Local Strategic Partnership opportunities may exist to use the grant as matched

funding to support a range of projects within the district. Since the Local Strategic Partnership and the District Council are strategically aligned there are opportunities for mutual gain.

CO109. FUNDING OF SOUTH KESTEVEN CITIZENS' ADVICE BUREAUX

DECISION:

- (1) To not support the request from the South Kesteven Citizens' Advice Bureau (SKCAB) for a supplementary grant of £3,500 as a contribution towards the additional costs of providing an additional session at the Grantham office from 1st October 2005;**
- (2) To approve core funding of £50,000 for the financial year 2006/07, the grant to be conditional upon the SKCAB entering into a Service Level Agreement with the Council;**
- (3) To note that additional resources will be available to fund additional capacity for advice and support for homelessness through the Government's Homelessness Innovation Fund commencing 2006.**

Considerations/Reasons for Decision:

- (1) Report number DCS32 by the Director of Community Services setting out proposals for the longer term programme of funding for the SKCAB. The SK CAB has expressed a concern about long-term stability in funding and the possibility that the Council could consider a further bid for 2005/06 in October this year. A request for a supplementary grant of £3,500 for the current financial year has been made to reflect the cost of three (3) hour session per week at the Grantham office from 1st October 2005 to 31st March 2006;
- (2) Noting from an oral update at the meeting given by the Director of Community Services, that the Countywide funders' consortium is of the opinion that the CAB would be regarded as a front line service provider. Funding through the Area South Partnership is really for infrastructure organisations and therefore the CAB would not be eligible for grant allocations through this Partnership;
- (3) The audit Commission's report on the Council's Strategic Housing function was critical that the Council provided funding for the CAB but did not have a service level agreement in place to ensure that benefits advice, debt counselling and housing rights advice are easily available in the area and contribute to the prevention of homelessness. The requirements for a service level agreement is therefore in response to this criticism;
- (4) Details given in the report on client contacts and advice references, and subsequently updated for the third quarter at the meeting;
- (5) Future partnership working will provide an opportunity for enhancing services in partnership with the SKCAB and this approach will be

beneficial for the future sustainability of the SKCAB;

(6) The Cabinet declines the request for the supplementary grant of £3,500 as it was made clear at the outset that in return for the core funding and free use of accommodation, the SKCAB had to undertake the hours of service specified within the original agreement;

(7) The Council (as part of a Countywide bid) has also successfully bid for ODPM Homeless Innovation Funding to work in partnership with the SKCAB to prevent homelessness, particularly in relation to work with the private rented sector. This is a two year programme of funding commencing in April 2006. One of the outcomes identified for this project is to provide additional capacity for advice and support within the private sector through an enhanced service in partnership with the Citizen Advice Bureaux who are integral to the successful delivery of the outcomes of the bid.

CO110. HOUSING IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE REPORT

The Leader had agreed to take this as an urgent item in order that members are aware at the earliest opportunity of the receipt of a letter from the Minister for Housing & Planning in which she refers to the Audit Commission's inspection of the Council's Strategic Housing Services.

The recommendations now contained in report DRS29 require a decision now in order for the work to be carried out and reported to Cabinet before the budget is prepared for Council.

DECISION:

- (1) To note the contents of the letter from the Minister for Housing & Planning and to note the contents of the reply from the Leader of the Council;**
- (2) The Director of Regulatory Services be authorised to include a bid for a provision of £20,000 within the Housing Solutions Business Plan for 2006/07 for work with the voluntary sector to deliver the Housing Improvement Plan. Expressions of interest to be sought from voluntary agencies and the amount awarded will be dependent on the additionality as demonstrated in the bid.**

Considerations/Reasons for Decision:

- (1) Report number DCS29 by the Director of Regulatory Services appending a letter addressed to the Leader referring to the poor rating which had been given by the Housing Inspectorate to the Council's Strategic Housing Service. However, she noted that the Inspectors had found a strong commitment at corporate level to drive through improvements. A copy of the Leader's reply was also attached;
- (2) The Director advised that, as part of the restructuring of the Housing

Service, work has been ongoing in building the relationship with the CAB with a view to developing a Service Level Agreement. The revised structure will provide additional capacity and further work with the voluntary sector will be required in order to provide advice on the prevention of homelessness. The bid for inclusion within the Housing Solutions business plan for 2006/07 is to support this work and for expressions of interest to be sought from voluntary agencies to work in partnership with the Council to provide housing advice.

CO111. REVIEW OF DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF SCHEME

DECISION:

- (1) That the Council adopts a new scheme for awarding Discretionary Rate Relief as set out in Appendix A to report FIN252, as amended to allow for 15% discretionary rate relief for community centres and village halls who have registered as a charity. The revised scheme to come into effect from 1st April 2006;**
- (2) That all awards for Discretionary Rate Relief and Mandatory Relief are delegated to the Revenues Manager;**
- (3) Appeals to be dealt with by the Portfolio Holder for Assets & Resources in consultation with the Director of Finance and Strategic Resources.**

Considerations/Reasons for Decision:

- (1) Report number FIN252 prepared by the Revenues Manager setting details of a proposed alternative Discretionary Rate Relief scheme. The Council decided to disinvest in its discretionary grants including Discretionary Rate Relief and set a budget of £10,000 per annum from 1st April 2006 for the award of Business Rate Relief. The Council is not in a position to deny applications for Business Rate Relief and therefore the Cabinet must review the criteria of awarding Discretionary Rate Relief and any issues as a result so as to keep within the £10,000 budget;
- (2) Details of the categories of ratepayers to who discretionary rate relief can be made and the two forms of rate relief – mandatory and discretionary. Based on current figures, Discretionary Rate Relief of approximately £93,000 per annum is awarded. If the Council did not have a scheme in place, the ratepayers would pay approximately £150,000 more in Business Rate each year and this would affect nearly 250 organisations including village halls and some schools;
- (3) Details of a proposed alternative scheme together with guidance for calculating Discretionary Rate Relief which demonstrates clear linkage to the Council's priorities;
- (4) Noting that the Portfolio Holder will consider revising the discretionary rate relief scheme next year to take account of those Sports Clubs who

have registered as a Community Amateur Sports Club being eligible for 80% relief;

(5) Noting that the Council will consider favourably applications from community centres and village halls that have made applications for charitable status but are awaiting confirmation of that status from the Charities Commission.

CO112. COMMUNITY STRATEGY FOR LINCOLNSHIRE

DECISION: That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, prepare a response to the County Council's first draft of the Community Strategy based on the views expressed in his report CEX310.

Considerations/Reasons for Decision:

- (1) Report number CEX310 by the Chief Executive and appended copy of the first draft by the Lincolnshire County Council of its Community Strategy. The main driver for this document has been the requirement to have a community strategy in place in order to secure a local area agreement for Lincolnshire;
- (2) The Cabinet concurs with the views expressed by the Chief Executive that the document could have better attempted to deal with the locality of Lincolnshire, and that certain targets are naïve or over optimistic. Whilst agreeing with the principle of the strategy, some of the actual detail needs addressing.

DATE DECISIONS EFFECTIVE:

Key decisions at minutes CO106, CO108, and CO111 and non key decisions taken on 9th January 2006 will become effective on 18th January 2006 unless subject to call-in by the relevant Development & Scrutiny Panel Chairman or five members of the Council.

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