

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SOCIAL WELL-BEING) held in Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 2 December 2014.

PRESENT: Councillor S J Criswell – Chairman.
Councillors M Francis, R Fuller, P Kadewere, S M Van De Kerkhove and Mrs R E Mathews.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors K M Baker, R C Carter, R S Farrer, Mrs P A Jordan and Mrs D C Reynolds.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors B S Chapman and T D Sanderson.

59. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 4th November 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

60. MEMBERS INTERESTS

No declarations of interests were received.

61. NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Panel received and noted the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which had been prepared by the Executive Leader for the period 1st December 2014 to 31st May 2015.

62. PETITION

The Panel received a petition relating to the Octagon, Station Road, St Ives containing 266 signatures. Following formal presentation of the petition by its organiser, Officers were asked to prepare a report for a future meeting on the issues raised by the petition. The organiser of the petition also was invited to make a submission on suitable uses for the Octagon.

63. WELFARE REFORM AND THE IMPACT ON HUNTINGDONSHIRE

(Executive Councillor B S Chapman attended the meeting for discussion on this item.)

By means of a report by the Benefits Manager and the Housing Needs and Resources Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel was updated on the effects of the Government's Welfare Reform programme and how it impacted upon

households in Huntingdonshire in relation to Housing Benefits, Council Tax Support and homelessness. Members discussed the changes that were taking place in respect of social sector size criteria rules, Council Tax Support, the benefit cap, Universal Credit, Migrants and discretionary housing payments.

In response to a question on the position of tenants of Registered Providers who had rent arrears, the Panel was advised of the interventions undertaken by the Council to prevent them from becoming homeless. Having also discussed the approach adopted to making discretionary housing payments and the affordability of private sector rented accommodation, it was agreed that a further update should be provided when circumstances required it.

64. COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2015/16

(Executive Councillor B S Chapman attended the meeting for discussion on this item.)

The Panel gave consideration to a report by the Benefits Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), on a proposed change to the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2015/16. The change meant the Council would disregard all child maintenance in its calculations, which would result in greater levels of Council Tax Support entitlement to those customers in receipt of this type of income. Having noted the implications of the change for the Council and the number of individuals who would be affected, it was

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be recommended to approve the change to the local Council Tax Support scheme with effect from 1st April 2015 as set out in the report now submitted.

65. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR, CRIME AND POLICING ACT 2014

(Executive Councillor T D Sanderson attended the meeting for discussion on this item.)

The Panel gave consideration to a report by the Head of Community Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) seeking authority for Officers to use new powers contained in the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 to tackle anti-social behaviour. As previous legislation had been repealed, the Council currently had no powers in this area.

The Panel commented that the introduction of the new Act was likely to create interest amongst the public in using the new powers, thereby placing greater demands on the Council. This could be exacerbated by the fact that the "test" of anti-social behaviour had been lowered, meaning that a larger range of activities could be classed as such. Furthermore, the Crown Prosecution Service would be able to refer cases directly to Councils to carry out enforcement. While the level of demand placed on the Council was not yet known, the Panel highlighted that, for these reasons, the service might need more resources.

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be informed that the Panel supports the delegation of the new powers to Officers to tackle anti-social behavior.

66. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMIC WELL-BEING) - PROJECT MANAGEMENT SELECT COMMITTEE

RESOLVED

that Councillors S J Criswell, R Fuller and S M Van De Kerkhove be appointed to the Project Management Select Committee.

67. WORKPLAN STUDIES

The Panel received and noted a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which contained details of studies being undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels for Economic Well-Being and Environmental Well-Being.

68. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SOCIAL WELL BEING PANEL) - PROGRESS

With the aid of a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel reviewed the progress of its activities since the last meeting. The Joint Working Group on Hinchingsbrooke Hospital was deleted from the programme pending a clear need for its reintroduction. Consideration would be given to whether use could be made of the report on the recent Care Quality Commission inspection of the Hospital.

69. SCRUTINY

The 150th edition of the Digest of Decisions was received and noted.

Chairman