

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS) held in Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Thursday, 7 March 2024.

- PRESENT: Councillor J E Kerr – Chair.
- Councillors T Alban, M J Burke, S J Criswell, J E Harvey, N J Hunt, M Kadewere, C Lowe and D J Shaw.
- APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors S Bywater, S R McAdam and G J Welton.
- IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors L Davenport-Ray, S W Ferguson and S L Taylor.

53. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1st February 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

54. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

55. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel received and noted the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme and the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions (a copy of which has been appended in the Minute Book) which had been prepared by the Executive Leader for the period 1st March 2024 to 30th June 2024.

56. PUBLIC ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STRATEGY

By means of a report by the Operations Manager and Assistant Director Strategic Insight and Delivery, (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the Public Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy was presented to the Panel.

Councillor Alban stated that he was pleased with the reassurance that rural villages would be supported with this strategy and that it was a collaborative piece of work.

Following an enquiry from Councillor Hunt regarding the common constraints in electrical supply, the Panel heard that this would be addressed on a case by case basis.

In response to a question from Councillor Lowe, the Panel heard that whilst a formal timescale had not yet been set for connection to the

grid, a lead time of 3 to 4 months was anticipated.

Councillor Kerr praised an excellent piece of work which she hoped would prove useful for parishes across the district, a sentiment which was shared by the Panel.

Following the discussion, it was

RESOLVED

that the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel be passed to Cabinet for their consideration when making a decision upon the recommendations contained within the report.

57. INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF THE LONG TERM OPERATING MODEL FOR ONE LEISURE

By means of a report and presentation by the Head of Leisure Services, (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the Independent Review of Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure was presented to the Panel.

Councillor Shaw expressed his support for the recommendations within the review and observed that the issues faced by the transfer of the Sawtry centre to an external company reinforced the need to continue to keep the service within the Council. This was a sentiment shared by Councillor Hunt, who enquired what changes users might expect during the transformation process. The Panel were assured that this work was underway and that although the changes to be made would ensure the commerciality of the centres remained this would also ensure self sufficiency.

Following an enquiry from Councillor Harvey relating to the potential reclamation of VAT, the Panel heard that this was being investigated by the Finance team and further details would be brought to the Panel at a later date.

Councillor Burke stated that the proposed changes to the One Leisure St Ives Outdoor centre were good to hear, and enquired about the potential inclusion of Health Hubs within the centres. The Panel heard that the team continued to work with Health Partners to maximise and develop opportunities.

Following a request from Councillor Alban to clarify the increased budget figures for One Leisure, the Panel heard that the achieved figures for the 2022/23 budget had set the budget target for 2023/24 and was due to an increase in revenue, an agree price increase, a capital bid being brought forward and the continued trajectory of growth within the industry.

Councillor Alban requested an update on the Sawtry centre on behalf of Councillor Bywater, in response to which, the Panel heard that the centre had been transferred to another owner in 2019 and whilst the team have endeavoured to provide support and positive outcomes in the best interests of the local community, the onus to do so does rest with the private operator.

Following a further question from Councillor Alban, the Panel heard that One Leisure Direct were more than a call centre, and that a consultation was currently underway which included a review of all One Leisure staff structures and responsibilities.

Following the discussion, it was

RESOLVED

that the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel be passed to Cabinet for their consideration when making a decision upon the recommendations contained within the report.

58. ONE LEISURE MEMBERSHIP ARCHITECTURE PROPOSAL

By means of a report and presentation by the Head of Leisure Services, (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the One Leisure Membership Architecture Proposal was presented to the Panel.

The Panel heard, in response to a question from Councillor Shaw, that off peak times were classified as 9am – 5pm daily and that this included school holiday periods.

Following an enquiry from Councillor Harvey, it was clarified that the new Junior membership would address a gap in the current memberships by providing a membership for young people aged 11-15, as a membership for 15-18 year olds was already in place.

Following the discussion, it was

RESOLVED

that the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel be passed to Cabinet for their consideration when making a decision upon the recommendations contained within the report.

59. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the press and public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

60. REVOCATION OF RISK BASED VERIFICATION POLICY

The Panel gave consideration to an exempt report by the Revenues and Benefits Manager (a copy of which was appended in the annex to the Minute Book), on the Revocation of the Risk Based Verification Policy which was presented to the Panel.

Following the discussion, it was

RESOLVED

that the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel be passed to Cabinet for their consideration when making a decision upon the recommendations contained within the report.

61. HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK PROJECT UPDATE

The Panel discussed an exempt report by the Open Spaces Project Manager and the Countryside Manager (a copy of which was appended in the annex to the Minute Book), on the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Project Update which was presented to the Panel.

62. RE-ADMITTANCE OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the press and public be readmitted to the meeting.

63. BIODIVERSITY 4 ALL - PROJECT UPDATE

By means of a report by the Open Spaces Project Manager, (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the Biodiversity 4 All – Project Update was presented to the Panel.

Following an enquiry from Councillor Harvey regarding the omission of the Riverside Park, Huntingdon from the report, the Panel were advised that the audit had been received after the report deadline but that it would be included in future plans.

Following a question from Councillor Alban, the Panel heard that all additional posts created by the project were fixed term and that the Ecologist roles were full time. It was further advised that a relationship had been established with Anglia Ruskin University to develop an intern and graduate placement programme. This relationship along with collaborative and funding opportunities would continue to be developed.

In response to a question from Councillor Shaw, the Panel were advised that 35 applications had been made in January but that only 10 could be taken forward. In addition it was noted that the team had been in contact with unsuccessful applicants to help develop their options and signpost them to external funding.

Following a query from Councillor Hunt, the Panel were assured that a robust Communications Plan was in place and that social media would be the preferred channel of communication.

64. HOUSEHOLD GARDEN WASTE SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE - UPDATE

By means of a report by the General Manager for Operations, (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the Household Garden Waste Subscription Service Update was presented to the Panel.

Councillor Shaw enquired about the communications to date to inform residents that food waste could not go into the green bins from April. Following which the Panel were advised that bin hangers communicating this message would be in circulation imminently and would also contain a message of alternative methods to dispose of food waste.

In response to a further question from Councillor Alban on the subject of green waste in grey bins, the Panel heard that currently 41% of all waste within the grey bins is green waste. Data collected from neighbouring Councils who had already implemented green waste subscription services showed an average of 46% green waste within grey bins.

The Panel were advised following an additional question from Councillor Alban, that the change to the subscription service was not expected to have an impact on contracted staff but would reduce the Council's dependency on agency staff.

The Panel heard that at a recent meeting of Hunts Waste Busters group wormeries were made by attendees to help with composting.

Chair