

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (PERFORMANCE AND GROWTH) held in Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 6 September 2023.

PRESENT: Councillor C M Gleadow – Chair.

Councillors A M Blackwell, I D Gardener, S A Howell, A R Jennings, R Martin, Dr M Pickering, N Wells and G J Welton.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors S J Corney, J E Harvey and R A Slade.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors S W Ferguson, B A Mickelburgh and T Sanderson.

21. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5th July 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

22. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor R Martin declared a Non-Registerable Interest under Minute 23/24 as Huntingdonshire District Councillor for Sawtry Ward.

23. NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Panel received and noted the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions (a copy of which has been appended in the Minute Book) which has been prepared by the Executive Leader for the period 1st September 2023 to 31st December 2023.

24. SAWTRY VILLAGE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN EXAMINATION OUTCOME AND PROGRESSION TO REFERENDUM

By means of a report by the Chief Planning Officer (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book) the Sawtry Village Neighbourhood Plan Examination Outcome and Progression to Referendum Report was presented to the Panel.

The hard work of the Parish Council and those involved in the development of the Plan was praised by Councillor Martin, a sentiment which was echoed by the Executive Councillor.

Following questions from Councillor Gleadow, the Panel heard that a Conservation Statement had not been produced for Sawtry. However, it was noted that the Neighbourhood Plan policies do use the Landscape and Townscape Supplementary Planning Document which is to be used to inform planning decisions and guide

development proposals. The Panel further heard that due to not being able to contact landowners, it had been recommended by the Examiner to remove two portions of the land identified as recommended green spaces within the Plan.

Whereupon, it was thereby

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.

25. FINANCE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2023-24 QUARTER 1

By means of a report by the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book) the Finance Performance Report Q1 was presented to the Panel.

It was clarified to the Panel, following a question from Councillor Jennings, that the interest rates within the report were based on current rates and would be adjusted throughout the year as appropriate.

Following a further question from Councillor Jennings, the Panel heard that conversations on the staff pay award were ongoing and that any reports within the media were speculative. However the Panel were assured that the current options being considered were affordable within the budget.

Councillor Jennings additionally queried a decrease in the expected income for additional green bins, the Panel heard that this was due a lower charge being made for the current year additional bin collection due to a reduction in the chargeable period, allowing for this to be brought in line with the subscription service due to be introduced in April 2024.

The Panel heard that there was confidence that timescales and funding would be achievable across the planned Market Towns Programme following a question from Councillor Gleadow.

Councillor Jennings inquired about the reduction in cash interest forecast within Table 4.2 as it was felt this contradicted the positive predictions across the report. The Officer confirmed that the detail would be sought and reported back to the Panel. It was also confirmed that PWLB loan maturity dates, taken to purchase commercial properties, would be added to this Table going forward.

The Panel were advised that whilst guarantees are not possible, the planned works to the properties within Fareham would maximise opportunities for yield, with potential tenants having expressed an interest in future rental already having been received.

Following an enquiry from Councillor Gardener, the Panel heard that work was ongoing to re-let the empty properties at the Rowley Centre in St Neots and that it was anticipated that marketing the two spaces together would generate greater interest.

Whereupon, it was thereby

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.

26. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2023-24 QUARTER 1

By means of a report and presentation by the Business Intelligence and Performance Manager (copies of which were appended in the Minute Book) the Corporate Performance Report Q1 was presented to the Panel.

It was observed by Councillor Gardener that some items were showing as a green status for the year when in actual fact they were currently under an amber status. It was explained that the current amber status was shown on the graphs and that the reason for the year end status showing as green was due to anticipated improvements over the year that would result in an overall green status. The Panel were advised that future reports would be revised to show both current and year end statuses in all summary tables.

Following an enquiry from Councillor Pickering on One Leisure admissions, the Panel was advised that full details of why performance was expected to partially recover by the end of March would be sought from the Portfolio Holder and reported back to the Panel.

Whilst the Panel praised the new format of the report, Councillor Jennings expressed concerns that in many cases the introductory commentary did not consider RAG status or performance into account, focusing on the positives and not the fuller picture. The Panel heard that this observation was noted and that this would be reviewed going forward with a possibility of merging the summary and detail sections to avoid unnecessary repetition. It was further observed by Councillor Gardener that the report layout was not as clear as the presentation previously shown to the Panel regarding the updates to the report style. Consideration would be given to amending the layout to reflect this feedback and the views of other stakeholders.

Councillor Martin enquired whether further detail could be provided regarding PI 15 to include detail on extensions to planning applications. The Panel were advised that this would be investigated and reported back to the Panel. Following a question from Councillor Gardener, it was noted that clarification would be given on PI 13 results and whether withdrawn applications were included.

The Panel were advised, following a query from Councillor Jennings, that the RAG status at year end would be reflective of the overall annual status where cumulative measures are used.

Whereupon, it was thereby

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.

27. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

With the aid of a report by the Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme was presented to the Panel.

Chair