

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING) held in Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 15 January 2013.

PRESENT: Councillor D Harty – Chairman.

Councillors M G Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, I C Bates, I J Curtis, J W Davies, D A Giles, G J Harlock and Mrs D C Reynolds.

Messrs D Hopkins and M Phillips – Co-opted Members.

APOLOGY: An Apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor C R Hyams.

64. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 11th December 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

65. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

66. NOTICE OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Panel considered and noted the current Notice of Executive Decisions (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which had been prepared by the Executive Leader of the Council for the period 1st January to 30th April 2013.

67. LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY TO WIND TURBINE DEVELOPMENT DRAFT REVISION OF THE WIND POWER SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD) 2006

(Councillor N J Guyatt, Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing, Mrs C Bond, Planning Policy Team Leader, and Mr C Thompson, Landscape Officer, were in attendance for consideration of this item).

With the aid of a report by the Head of Planning and Housing Strategy (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) and a presentation delivered by the Landscape Officer, the Panel was provided with an opportunity to comment upon the draft revision of the Wind Power Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which was originally adopted in February 2006. In introducing the item, the Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing reported that the Government's position with regard to Wind Power had not changed. The Government was supportive of such developments and was

encouraging local authorities to adopt the same stance. The Landscape Officer advised Members that whilst the consultation period had closed through the planning portal, their comments would be accepted by the Head of Planning and Housing Strategy as part of the consultation.

Members were apprised of the background to the SPD and noted the various developments that had occurred since 2006. Additionally, it was reported that in early 2012, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) had replaced the previous suite of Planning Policy Statements. Members' attention was drawn to the revisions that had been made to the SPD, which had taken into account new issues such as the changes arising from the NPPF and inconsistencies identified between the Land Use Consultants' report commissioned in 2005 and the original Wind Power SPD. Reference was also made to those matters, which the SPD did not include such as setting a limit on the proximity of Wind Turbine developments to dwellings. Members were advised that it was the Government's view that this was not a matter of landscape sensitivity and that instead it should be addressed through the completion of a Residential Amenity Assessment. Furthermore, it was confirmed that each application received would be considered on a case by case basis.

Members expressed concern at the impact of cumulative developments and the effect this would have on the appearance of the District. They commented that a limit on numbers should be set to prevent wind turbines from being constructed within close proximity to one another. In response, the Landscape Officer reiterated that each application would be considered on its own merits and that it would not be prudent at this time to stipulate a limit as the District's landscape differed from area to area. The Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing also reported that he had requested Officers to strengthen the draft revised SPD in this respect but requested Members to be mindful of the fact that it was the Government's policy that the Council was implementing. The proposed change was endorsed by the Panel.

In noting that the Ouse Valley area's landscape had a high capacity to accommodate single turbines, clarification was received from the Landscape Officer over the meaning of paragraph 6 point (e) of the guidance. It was reported that the guidance was intended to encourage developers to consider existing infrastructure when determining the location of the turbines. The Panel requested that this matter was reconsidered and clarified.

A discussion then ensued on the revised group sizes that were proposed. It was the Panel's view that the SPD should not specify an upper limit for large groups of wind turbines. It was considered that 24 turbines in a single application was too large a development for an area such as Huntingdonshire. This would not be an acceptable policy for the Council to adopt in light of the District's profile. The Panel was acquainted with an example of a site that the Council considered could accommodate three turbines but the developer applied to put four turbines on the site and the application succeeded at appeal. It was argued that if the Council specified an upper limit, it would provide developers with an indication of the level of development for which they could expect to receive approval and, as

with the example, they would seek to exceed it. Instead, the Council should take the same approach for the proximity of wind turbine developments to dwellings; that is, each application received should be considered on a case-by-case basis following an assessment as part of the Environmental Statement.

RESOLVED

that the Panel's comments as set out above on the consultation on the draft revised Wind Power SPD be conveyed to the Head of Planning and Strategic Housing.

(The meeting adjourned at 8.00pm and reconvened at 8.05pm).

68. SPEED REDUCTION INITIATIVE - HILTON

(Mr D McCandless, St Ives and Ramsey Sector Community Speedwatch Coordinator, and Parish Councillor A Bush, Hilton Parish Council, were in attendance for consideration of this item).

Mr D McCandless, St Ives and Ramsey Sector Community Speedwatch Coordinator, outlined the background to the speed reduction initiative in Hilton whereby speed restriction signs were placed on wheeled bins. He reported that the pilot had been agreed at the Speedwatch Coordinator's Conference on 8th December 2010 and endorsed by the County Council. Other local authorities, including Warwickshire and Mid Bedfordshire, were supportive of such initiatives, often supplying the speed reduction stickers themselves to residents who lived in eligible areas. Members were advised that the scheme was also supported by the Police.

Given that wheeled bins were the property of the District Council, Mr McCandless had met with the Head of Operations to seek permission for residents to display speed reduction stickers on their bins. Whilst the Council was reluctant to allow any stickers on bins, the current position was that the matter would be re-considered pending the outcome of a trial in Hilton.

In response to a question by Councillor G J Harlock on whether any empirical evidence of the effectiveness of such campaigns existed, Mr McCandless stated that evidence had been obtained from other local authorities and that there was strong support for the scheme from a road safety point of view. He further confirmed that the stickers would only be visible on the day of waste collections and that residents would not be encouraged to leave their bins out on the roadside. Mr McCandless went on to refer to a best practice guide, which was issued to all residents involved in the scheme. It was further noted that the scheme would only be deployed in known speeding hotspot areas of towns and villages.

It was reported that the current stock of speed reduction stickers had been funded by a local firm who had donated £750 to Speedwatch. Residents were able to purchase a packet of six stickers at a cost of £5. The purpose of addressing the Panel was to seek the Council's support for the campaign. It was hoped the Council would withdraw its objection to the display of stickers on wheelie bins, approve the format and design of the stickers and agree to fund the stickers in the

future.

Having thanked Mr McCandless and Parish Councillor A Bush for their attendance at the meeting, the Chairman suggested that the Panel should meet with the Executive Councillor for Environment and the Head of Operations to discuss the proposal further. A written report outlining the terms of the proposal was requested for submission to a future Panel meeting.

RESOLVED

that a report outlining the terms and potential benefits of the speed reduction initiative in Hilton be submitted to a future Panel meeting.

69. DRAINAGE

(Mr C Allen, Project and Assets Manager, and Councillor Mrs A Rees, Yaxley Parish Council, were in attendance for consideration of this item).

(At 8.40pm, during discussion on this item, Councillor I C Bates left the meeting).

With the aid of a report prepared by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel received an update on drainage problems experienced in Yaxley and on recent flooding events within the District.

The Project and Assets Manager reported upon the successes of the District Council's interventions in resolving the problems experienced within Yaxley, which included the removal of fats, oils and greases from the pumping station and of silt that had built up in surface water sewers and works to clear a flow path through the balancing pond. Members noted that Anglian Water had now placed both foul and surface water sewers on planned preventative maintenance programmes, with survey works currently being undertaken on the sewer running between Stilton and Main Street, Yaxley in order to further reduce the risk of sewer flooding. Discussions were currently ongoing with the County Council concerning the establishment of a Surface Water Management Plan in Yaxley. Having regard to the November and December 2012 floods, it was reported that there had been no reports of flooding within the village.

Councillor Mrs A Rees of Yaxley Parish Council reported that there had been some incidents of flooding in the West End area of Yaxley, but that Anglian Water had attended to them immediately. She also confirmed that she had not received any further reports of flooding over the December 2012 period.

Councillor Mrs M Banerjee queried the reasons why foul and surface water sewers were flooding within the village, and in response, the Project and Assets Manager confirmed that this was a result of the problems experienced at the pumping station. He went on to state that Anglian Water had accepted there was a problem and had made attempts to resolve it by cleaning out the pumping station.

The Panel then received an update on the recent flooding events within the District. The River Nene had caused flooding to a number of houses in the northern parts of the District and the Ouse had caused problems in Brampton. Surface water flooding was a particular concern in Stilton. Having regard to the latter, it was reported that a problem had been identified with the maintenance of ditches within the area, but that the District Council was currently working with the County Council to prevent such incidents from occurring in the future. Owing to the scale of the flooding experienced, the Project and Assets Manager indicated that he had considered opening emergency rest centres on Christmas Eve; however, this had not been necessary.

Having been advised that around 2,500 – 3,000 sandbags had been delivered to affected areas over November and December 2012, the Projects and Assets Manager suggested the Council should consider the adoption of a Sandbag Policy within the District. In doing so, the Panel requested that this matter should be reviewed in the context of the Council's wider Emergency Planning arrangements and a report on the outcome submitted to a future meeting. Having also requested for a further update on drainage and flooding, the Panel

RESOLVED

- (a) that the content of the report now submitted be noted;
- (b) that a further update on drainage and flooding be submitted to the Panel; and
- (c) that a report on Emergency Planning, to include the Council's use of sandbags, be submitted to a future Panel meeting.

70. CHARGING FOR A SECOND GREEN BIN - CALL IN

Pursuant to Minute No. 12/58 and with the aid of a report by the Cabinet (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel was acquainted with the Cabinet's response to the call-in of the previous decision relating to charging for emptying second green bins. The Cabinet had reiterated that the proposal would be considered with all the Council's options for savings as part of the Medium Term Plan process.

RESOLVED

- that the contents of the report now submitted be noted.

71. WORK PLAN STUDIES

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

72. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING) - PROGRESS

The Panel received and noted a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which contained details of actions taken in response to recent discussions and decisions. In doing so, Members were acquainted with details of their forthcoming work programme up to the end of the current Municipal Year.

73. SCRUTINY

In scrutinising the 130th Edition of the Decision Digest, the Panel requested that clarification be sought from the Head of Customer Services on whether the charges affecting the empty homes premium, as reported under the Technical Reform of Council Tax item, would be levied upon those houses that had already been empty for a period of two years when the change came into effect.

Chairman