

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE SUPPORT) held in the Council Chamber, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 8 July 2008.

PRESENT: Councillor P M D Godfrey – Vice Chairman in the Chair.

Councillors M G Baker, K M Baker, J T Bell, J W Davies, P J Downes, P M D Godfrey, D Harty, Ms S Kemp, L W McGuire, M F Newman, R G Tuplin and R J West.

APOLOGIES:: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors P H Dakers, A N Gilbert and J A Gray.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor P G Mitchell  
Ms L McBreen, Customer Response Manager, Anglian Water Services Ltd  
T Blackmore, Collection Manager, Anglian Water Services Ltd

### 19. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 10th June 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### 20. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor Ms S L Kemp declared a personal interest in Minute No. 21 as an employee of a subsidiary of Anglian Water.

Councillors P J Downes, D Harty and L W McGuire declared personal interests in Minute No. 21 as Members of Cambridgeshire County Council.

Councillors R G Tuplin and R J West declared personal interests in Minute No. 23 as members of the Development Control Panel.

### 21. SEWAGE PROBLEMS, ST AUDREY LANE, ST IVES

The Chairman welcomed Ms L McBreen, Customer Response Manager and Mr T Blackmore, Collection Manager for Anglian Water Services Ltd who had been invited to the meeting to discuss the problems being experienced by residents of St. Audrey Lane, Warren Road and Pig Lane area of St. Ives, arising from flooding of the foul sewerage system. The matter had been brought to the attention of the Panel by a petition signed by 26 people and presented to its meeting in February 2008.

By way of introduction, Councillor M G Baker, who had been

appointed to a working group for the purpose of gathering further information from local residents, acquainted the Panel with details of the problems, their frequency and a number of potential solutions. The Chairman then invited the Anglian Water representatives to respond to a series of questions which had been notified to them in advance of the meeting.

In discussing the scale of the problem, the Panel was informed that there had only been one problem reported in Pig Lane and two in St. Audrey Lane within the past year. Nine complaints had been logged on Anglian Water's complaints system although there had been an increase in recent months. Anglian Water's responsibility for the problem related to those areas where the sewage and drainage systems had been adopted. However, in the area in question the Panel was informed that there were a number of un-adopted drains and sewers which were in the ownership of local residents.

The Panel discussed the capacity of the pumping station at Broadleas, St. Ives and noted that there were no plans at present to upgrade the facility which was considered adequate to cope with times of normal flow. The system had been upgraded approximately 5 – 7 years previously and it was explained that future flows and developments would have been taken in account at this time. In respect of new developments within the area, the Panel noted that anticipated flow rates were usually appraised and surface water accommodated by sustainable drainage systems. Members were also informed of proposals to lay a new sewer in the A1123.

In considering a number of options to deal with the problems concerning the dispersal of water, the Panel noted that all would require significant investment. In response to a question from Members, Mr Blackmore outlined the process by which investment projects were prioritised and the Register of Internal Flooding used for investment priorities. He emphasised the need for local residents to register a loss of toilet facilities on each and every occasion that this occurred and to make a written complaint if they were not satisfied with the outcome. This would help to raise the profile of the problem.

The Panel was provided with an explanation of "illegal" connections to the foul system which were alleged to be the cause of many of the problems and noted that prosecutions were considered to be too time consuming and costly. Instead Anglian Water would be seeking to increase educational awareness amongst householders and would welcome assistance from Councils and local builders in this respect. The Panel was informed that consideration would be given to the installation of a flow monitoring system to identify areas from which illegal flows were emanating, although this could not be undertaken in un-adopted sewers and drains.

The Panel also was advised of the process under which developers made provision for surface water and foul drainage from new dwellings and the absence of any need to liaise with Anglian Water since privatisation of the industry. A Government report into the floods of summer 2007 had highlighted the deficiencies in the current system and the responsibility for all households to be aware of making legal connections to the drainage system when constructing, hard standings etc. The Panel was informed that, more locally, the

issue was being discussed by the Council with the water industry in terms of the impact of the development planned in the Core Strategy by the drafting of a Local Investment Framework.

Having noted that the profile of the issue had now been raised, that Anglian Water would be giving the matter further consideration and that a CCTV investigation of the surface water drain in Pig Lane would be undertaken to see if it required cleansing, the Panel asked the representatives of Anglian Water to provide details of their investigations to the local residents and to provide an update on progress to the Council in six months time. They were then thanked for their attendance at the meeting and the comprehensive answers that they had given to the questions asked.

## **22. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000: FORWARD PLAN**

The Panel considered and noted the current Forward Plan of key decisions (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) scheduled for consideration by the Cabinet, which had been prepared by the Leader of the Council.

Members requested that the future reports by the Planning Policy Manager on proposals for Huntingdon Riverside Park and the development of a supplementary planning document for planning contributions be submitted to future meetings of the Panel.

## **23. REVIEW OF PUBLIC SPEAKING AT DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PANEL**

*(Councillor P G Mitchell, Chairman of the Development Control Panel was in attendance for this item).*

Further to Minute No. 07/76 and with the assistance of a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Panel were acquainted with the outcome of a recent survey of Members and of those members of the public who had addressed the Development Control Panel on a planning application within the past year. The survey had been undertaken on behalf of the Panel to review the operation of the procedure for public speaking in respect of planning applications which now had been in operation for twelve months.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor P G Mitchell commented on his perceptions in relation to the operation of the scheme which he considered to have been well received. In addition, the Head of Planning Services agreed, that overall, the introduction of public speaking had worked well and had provided an opportunity for well informed debates on a number of difficult issues as well as enabling members of the public to feel that they had received a fair hearing.

The Panel's attention was drawn to the main issues which had been identified from the questionnaire which fell into a number of distinct areas. In doing so, the Panel discussed with the Chairman of the Development Control Panel the time limits for speaking, the ordering of speakers, the opportunity for representatives to make points of clarification, publicity and the potential to provide separate time slots for interest groups and statutory consultees.

Overall, the Panel concluded that the current arrangements were working satisfactorily and that the Chairman of the Development Control Panel was able to exercise sufficient discretion / flexibility to address any issues which had arisen from the questionnaire. Having noted the intention of the Chairman to address the comments made by members of the public in relation to the intimidating and daunting nature of the Panel proceedings, Members agreed that there were no changes they wished to raise with the Development Control Panel.

Having regard to the recent presentation of two petitions to full council, the Panel agreed that it would be preferable for future petitions relating to planning applications to be dealt with as part of the public speaking arrangements. The Head of Administration undertook to revise the arrangements as part of the biennial review of the Council constitution in Spring 2009. Whereupon it was

RESOLVED

that the report, together with the Panel's views on the matter, be submitted to a future meeting of the Development Control Panel.

#### **24. PARISH CHARTER FOR HUNTINGDONSHIRE**

Further to Minute No. 07/15 and with the assistance of a report by a working group (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), Councillor P J Downes acquainted the Panel with the outcome of the deliberations of the group which had been established to consider the question of a Parish Charter in terms of the Council's relationship with town and parish councils in the District.

Having considered the Working Group's report, the Panel agreed that there was little value in proceeding with a Parish Charter with the towns and parishes at the present time. However, in recognition of the disappointment which was likely to be expressed by some councils if a charter were not to proceed, the Panel suggested that the reasons for the conclusion be explained to town and parish councils, together with an assurance that the matter would be kept under review as the powers and responsibilities of the various tiers of local government altered with changing legislation.

RESOLVED

that the Working Group's report and recommendations be endorsed for submission to the Cabinet, together with a recommendation concerning the need to explain the reasons for the decision.

#### **25. WORKPLAN STUDIES**

The Panel considered and noted a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) reviewing the Panel's programme of studies. In doing so, Councillor D Harty reported on the investigations being undertaken by the Section 106 Working Group.

In discussing potential future studies, the Panel noted that following a suggestion by the Service Delivery Panel, it had been agreed by the Chairman that the Director of Environmental and Community Services be invited to a future meeting to make a presentation on the Great Fen Project. In the light of a suggestion by Councillor A N Gilbert about the possibility of undertaking a review of the impact of the Licensing Act on the night time economy in the District, the Head of Administration undertook to prepare a report for submission to a future meeting.

Members noted that a review of the evidence that justified the Housing Needs Assessment would be undertaken by the Service Delivery Panel, with comments being invited from the Service Support Panel as appropriate. Members were also invited to consider any suggestions for future studies in advance of the September meeting of the Panel.

## **26. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE SUPPORT)**

The Panel considered and noted a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) reviewing the Panel's progress to date on issues that had been discussed previously.

In referring to the study of the Council's Travel Plan, the Panel were apprised of recent discussions with regard to the recommendation concerning concessionary parking rates for members of staff who car shared and parked in Bridge Place Car Park. The Head of Administration reported that the issues relating to members' mileage rates would be resolved over the summer.

The Panel was also advised of discussions at a meeting of the Huntingdonshire Traffic Management Joint Area Committee (AJC) earlier in the week. Contrary to advice given at the Panel's previous meeting, the Head of Administration reported that the prioritisation exercise of cycling routes within Huntingdonshire had already been undertaken by officers of the District and County Councils. As a consequence, it had been agreed with the Chairman that, to avoid any unnecessary delay, the AJC should endorse the priority list of cycling schemes in Huntingdonshire and that Members would be consulted on the to identification of any additional routes within their wards before the next review in summer 2009.

The Head of Administration reported that following discussion with the Panel Chairmen, a realignment of Executive Councillors between the two Overview and Scrutiny Panels had been agreed to reflect revised Cabinet responsibilities. As a consequence Customer Services and Information Technology would now become the responsibility of the Service Delivery Panel with effect informally from September 2008 with the situation being formalised when the constitution was next reviewed.

Arising from a question by Councillor P J Downes, concerning the implications of the Sustainable Communities Act 2007 for the Council, the Head of Administration agreed to report back to the Panel at a later date.

**27. SCRUTINY**

The Panel considered and noted the latest edition of the Council's Decision Digest, summarising the Council's decisions over the past month.

Arising from a question, the Head of Administration undertook to provide further information in respect of a failure to achieve the performance management target relating to the objective of ensuring that the Council was an employer that people wished to work for.

Chairman