

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE DELIVERY) held in the Wren Room, Countryside Centre, Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, Brampton Road, Huntingdon, PE29 6DB on Tuesday, 3 February 2009.

PRESENT: Councillor S J Criswell – Chairman.

Councillors J D Ablewhite, Mrs M Banerjee, Mrs K E Cooper, Mrs J A Dew, J E Garner, P Godley, Mrs P A Jordan, P G Mitchell, P K Ursell and J S Watt.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors J M Sadler and M F Shellens.

### **74. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 6th January 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **75. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Councillor S J Criswell declared a personal interest in Minute Nos. 78 and 80 by virtue of his membership of Cambridgeshire County Council.

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

The Panel considered the current Forward Plan of Key Decisions (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which had been prepared by the Leader of the Council for the period 1st February to 31st May 2009. The Panel were advised that the item on Older Persons Housing Strategy Update had been deferred and would be submitted to the Panel's April meeting.

In noting the addition of an item entitled Lettings Policy Review, Councillor Mrs M Banerjee undertook to investigate the background to the item in order to determine whether it should be submitted to a future meeting of the Panel.

### **77. CUSTOMER SERVICE QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT: OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2008**

*(Councillor L M Simpson, Executive Councillor for Customer Services and Information Technology, was in attendance for this item).*

Consideration was given to the Customer Service Quarterly Performance Report for the period October to December 2008 (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). The Panel received a detailed explanation of each section of the Report and, in response to questions by Members, clarification was provided of a number of

activities to which reference was made, including the procedure for logging complaints at the Call Centre for missed refuse collections and the categorisation of service enquiries received at the Customer Service Centres. Following a further question, Members were informed that the figures contained in the Report were consistent with seasonal trends in previous years. They also received an update on the Council's ability to accept payments via the website.

The Panel also received an update on the development of the Customer Service Centres in St Ives and St Neots. At present, the cost implications of relocating the Centres were being investigated. It was suggested that the Connexions service might be incorporated into the centres.

The Panel was acquainted with the outcome of a "Mystery Shopper" exercise, which had been undertaken via telephone, email and the Council's website. The Council had performed well in comparison with other local authorities, particularly through telephone enquiries.

The Head of Customer Services reported that the format of future performance reports would be amended to reflect the organisation of the Corporate Plan – "Growing Success".

#### **78. LEISURE CENTRE MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS**

*(Councillor D B Dew, Executive Councillor for Leisure Centres, was in attendance for this item).*

Consideration was given to a joint report by the Head of Administration and the General Manager, Leisure (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) containing details of a proposal to change the funding and management arrangements of the District's jointly provided Leisure Centres. The proposal had arisen as a result of recent legislative change affecting the way the education service operated. The Panel noted that the proposal to dispense with the current Management Committees and to replace them with an Active Leisure Forum would result in savings on audit fees and on the administrative costs associated with servicing the meetings.

In also noting that the arrangements would change the way in which the Centres were funded, the Panel was that the County Council would continue to have an obligation to contribute towards the cost of capital repairs at each of the Centres. Having reviewed the proposed terms of reference for the Forum, suggestions were made for changes to the areas covered by the St Ives and Huntingdon Leisure Centres to be made and for the notification period for meetings of the Forum to be longer than the proposed five day period. Subject to the comments outlined above, the Panel

**RESOLVED**

that the report now submitted be endorsed for submission to the Cabinet.

## **79. PROMOTING BETTER HEALTH IN OLDER PEOPLE THROUGH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

The Panel received and noted a joint report by the Head of Environmental and Community Health Services and the General Manager, Leisure (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) reviewing the progress made to date in respect of the Panel's recommendations following its previous study into promoting better health in older people through physical activity. Particular reference was made to ways in which the "Active at 50" project had contributed to the aims of the study. In this respect the Panel noted that, in addition to a Big Lottery Fund award, further grant aid from the Local Public Services Agreement reward fund had also been received.

Whilst a lack of resources had prevented the creation and maintenance of a database of exercise services and facilities for older people from taking place, the Panel expressed the view that such a database would have benefits. In that context, Members requested Officers to investigate other ways in which this recommendation might be achieved.

## **80. ADOPTION OF ROADS AND SEWERS**

The Panel received and noted a report by the Adoption of Roads and Sewers Working Group (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) outlining their preliminary findings. By way of background, Members were reminded that the Working Group had previously been tasked with undertaking a study on "the process of adopting estate roads and sewers with an aim to put measures in place that could streamline the process and make the procedures more transparent, initially by investigation of introducing a District-wide register of unadopted roads and sewers".

Members were advised that the Working Group had completed its investigations into the procedures associated with the adoption of sewers. In this respect the Government's intention to transfer responsibility for privately owned sewers and lateral drains in England to statutory water and sewerage companies represented a significant development.

The Panel also were acquainted with the outcome of a recent meeting of the Working Group at which the County Council's procedure for adopting estate roads and the District Council's powers as the local Planning Authority within the procedure had been examined. These investigations had revealed that the existence of only limited legal powers throughout the process could inhibit the successful completion of the process.

Following discussion on the adoption of roads, the Panel expressed the view that a more proactive approach should be undertaken by responsible bodies to ensure that roads were adopted in a timely manner. Having noted that the Working Group would pursue this at its next meeting, the Panel were advised that the study was nearing completion.

**81. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE DELIVERY) - STUDIES**

The Panel considered a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which contained details of actions taken in response to recent discussions and decisions. Members were advised that the Cabinet had deferred consideration of the Panel's final report on grant aid to enable consultation with the relevant Executive Councillors to take place. Having discussed the general principle of involving Executive Councillors in studies, Members concluded that, while this was acceptable for external studies, this involvement should be limited when Executive Councillors were being held to account.

**82. SCRUTINY**

The 91st Edition of the Decision Digest was received and noted.

**83. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Panel would be held on Tuesday, 3rd March 2009 at 7:00pm in the Wren Room, Countryside Centre, Hinchingsbrooke Country Park.

Chairman