

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, 13 January 2009.

PRESENT: Councillor J A Gray – Chairman.

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

APOLOGY An Apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillors P H Dakers.

66. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 9th December 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

67. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

68. 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 reports on the Local Investment Framework, the deliberations of the Structure Review Working Group and the Masterplan for land east of Sapley Square be submitted to future meetings of the Panel. The Great Fen Masterplan had been previously identified as an item which the Panel wished to consider and the Chairman reported that the contents of the collaboration agreement would be available at a later date. Further information was also sought on proposals for land adjacent to the Grant Cinema, Ramsey and the Supplementary Planning Document for developer contributions.

Having regard to forthcoming decisions on grant and awards, the Chairman urged Members to make any comments on the applications direct to the relevant Executive Councillor in advance of their deliberations.

69. IMPROVEMENT WORKS TO CAR PARKS AT HUNTINGDON AND ST NEOTS RAIL STATIONS

Further to Minute No. 08/ 64, the Chairman reported on the circumstances surrounding the decision not to invite representatives of First Capital Connect and Network Rail to attend the meeting. These related to ongoing discussions between the Council as the Local Planning Authority and Network Rail over permitted development rights. The Chairman then welcomed the District Council's Transportation Team Leader who had been invited to the meeting to provide an update on these matters.

By way of introduction, the Transportation Team Leader explained that improvements to the car parking facilities at both Huntingdon and St Neots Stations had been agreed as part of negotiations concerning the award of the railway franchise to First Capital Connect. Members were then acquainted with the background to the ongoing discussions between the Local Planning Authority and Network Rail. Arising from the expansion proposals, the Panel expressed concerns about vehicular access to the St Neots Station and the Western Car Park in Huntingdon.

In discussing the current situation, Members commented that any changes to vehicular access at Huntingdon Station could not be considered in isolation from the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan, and the parking capacity problems experienced by off-peak travellers in the Town. Members also queried the impact that the outcome of current enquires concerning permitted development rights would have on the situation.

The Panel discussed connections between train and bus services operating from the Huntingdon and St. Neots Stations. Problems in this respect were particularly apparent in St. Neots. The Panel were informed that while Stagecoach had already been advised of these problems, Councillor P L E Bucknell would be meeting with bus companies to discuss the matter in the near future.

70. SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF ALCOHOL ABUSE

Further to Minute No. 08/31 and with the assistance of a report by the Working Group (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel were acquainted with the outcome of the deliberations of the Social Consequences of Alcohol Abuse Working Group which had been established to consider the problem of alcohol abuse and its social consequences.

In considering the Working Group's report, Councillor L W McGuire outlined his continuing concerns at the Local Strategic Partnership's decision not to support an application for funding to implement the County-Wide Alcohol Strategy as an investment proposal for reward monies from the Local Public Service Agreement. In his view, this would have resulted in a co-ordinated approach being taken to tackling problems associated with alcohol consumption.

Members also emphasised the need to emphasise to enforcement agencies to make full use of the powers available to them to tackle

the effects of alcohol misuse and resultant public disorder. A suggestion was made that the wording of the recommendations should be strengthened accordingly. Having agreed that the study should be revisited towards the end of the year, it was

RESOLVED

that subject to the amendment of recommendation (c) by the Head of Administration after consultation with the Chairman in accordance with the views set out above, the Working Group's report and recommendations be endorsed for submission to the Cabinet.

71. 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, Councillors Harty and McGuire reported on the investigations being undertaken by the Working Groups reviewing the Section 106 process and maximising Council income respectively.

In considering future potential areas for study, the Panel's attention was drawn to the list of suggestions for studies which had previously been identified. It was decided that the Council's future borrowing arrangements should be considered following the forthcoming meeting of the Corporate and Strategic Framework Panel. In light of the ongoing review of the Council's political management structure and the potential change to the overview and scrutiny arrangements, it was agreed that it would not be appropriate to start any fresh studies before the commencement of the new Municipal Year. .

72. 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 previously discussed.

The Panel were acquainted with the deliberations of the Countywide Freight Quality Partnership with regard to parking for Heavy Commercial Vehicles. The Central Services Manager was asked to establish the current situation with regard to the Alconbury site and to the outcome of discussions at the first meeting of the three County group which had been established to pool information and develop an Heavy Commercial Vehicle Strategy.

The Chairman reported on his recent discussions with the Executive Councillor and the Director of Environmental and Community Services concerning the Great Fen Project. Having discussed the Panel's representation at a forthcoming meeting with business representatives it was agreed that Councillor M G Baker should chair the meeting on local procurement on 12th March 2009.

73. SCRUTINY

The Panel considered and noted the latest edition of the Council's Decision Digest, summarising the Council's decisions since the previous meeting.

Having regard to the deliberations of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) on customer service development in St. Ives and St. Neots, the Panel endorsed their comments on the need to consult Ward Councillors on any proposals to change the location of existing customer service centres and on the investigation of outreach services in larger villages. It was agreed that these views should be conveyed to the relevant Executive Councillor.

74. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Panel noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday, 10th February 2009 at 7.30pm in the Wren Room, Countryside Centre, Hinchingsbrooke Park.

Chairman