

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE SUPPORT) held in the Countryside Centre, Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, Brampton Road, Huntingdon PE29 6DB on Tuesday, 14 April 2009.

PRESENT: Councillor J A Gray – Chairman.
Councillors P H Dakers, J W Davies, P J Downes, A N Gilbert, P M D Godfrey, 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 M G Baker, J T Bell and D Harty.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors I C Bates, P L E Bucknell, K J Churchill, J J Dutton, C R Hyams and T D Sanderson.

Prior to the arrival of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman took the Chair.

Councillor P M D Godfrey, Vice-Chairman in the Chair.

93. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 10th March 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

94. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor P J Downes declared a personal interest in Minute No. 98 as the Chairman of the Friends of Hinchingsbrooke House and due to the proximity of his house in relation to the area being discussed.

Councillors P J Downes and L W McGuire declared a personal interest in Minute No. 99 as Members of Cambridgeshire County Council.

Councillor R G Tuplin declared a prejudicial interest in Minute No. 100 as a member of the Democratic Structure Review Working Party and left the meeting before the discussion on this item.

95. 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.

In so doing, the Panel was advised that the Great Fen Collaboration Agreement was likely to be available for the Panel's consideration in

June. The Great Fen Master Plan had been delayed but it was hoped that this would be available for the Panel to scrutinise in July.

The Panel was informed that the deadline for comment on proposed changes to the policy for gypsies and travellers in the East of England Plan meant that these had to be submitted before the next meeting of the Panel. As a result, Members requested sight of the comments made retrospectively at a future meeting.

The Head of Planning Services reported that the A14 statutory orders consultation would not be available until July and that a special Council meeting had been arranged for that month to enable a response to be formulated.

96. PROPOSALS FOR RIVERSIDE PARK, HUNTINGDON

(Councillor P L E Bucknell, Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Councillors J J Dutton and C R Hyams, Ward Councillors, were in attendance for this Item).

Following an introduction by the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, consideration was given to a report by the Heads of Planning, Operations and Environmental Management Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the outcome of a consultation exercise on proposed improvements to the Riverside Park, Huntingdon which had included a public exhibition, meetings, questionnaires and workshops with young people. The Panel was advised that the scheme had been split into two phases to reflect the views expressed during the consultation and the financial situation of the Council. It was hoped that Phase I would be implemented in the current financial year, with Phase II in 2011/2012.

In response to a question, the Projects and Assets Manager explained that expenditure on moorings was considered necessary in order to improve safety and access. The Panel was advised that an allocation of £34,000 for the play area was intended to provide outdoor gym equipment and climbing areas, the consultation exercise having shown that youth groups preferred equipment which gave a wider range of play activity and appeal to girls as well as boys.

The Panel raised concern over the allocation of £15,000 for the 'greening' of the traffic island at the Bridge Hotel as this formed part of the highway and, as such, was considered to be the responsibility of the County Council. Members also felt that the amount allocated for planting was excessive and did not support the proposed ongoing revenue expenditure of £20,000 per annum for improved maintenance of the wildlife area at the park.

As Ward Councillors, Councillors Dutton and Hyams addressed the Panel on the report submitted.

RESOLVED

that the Panel broadly welcome the scheme but feel that Phase II should be regarded as aspirational only at this stage.

Councillor J A Gray in the Chair.

97. MASTER PLAN FOR LAND EAST OF SAPLEY SQUARE, HUNTINGDON

(Councillor P L E Bucknell, Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Councillor J J Dutton, Ward Councillor, were in attendance for this Item).

With the assistance of a report by the Heads of Planning and Financial Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel considered the proposed master plan for land east of Sapley Square, Huntingdon, which had been drafted following the latest public consultation on the preferred options for Sapley East and the development of a Community Enterprise Centre. The Panel commented on the success of the consultation exercise which was considered to have been well attended and highly interactive, particularly as local residents welcomed the proposals in the master plan, especially the provision for extra car parking and green spaces.

As Ward Councillor, Councillor Dutton addressed the Panel on the report submitted.

RESOLVED

that the Panel endorse the report and the master plan as drafted.

98. HUNTINGDON WEST AREA ACTION PLAN

(Councillor P L E Bucknell, Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Councillor T D Sanderson, Ward Councillor, were in attendance for this Item).

The Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy introduced a report by the Head of Planning Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the preferred approach for taking forward the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan.

Although the Panel welcomed the proposals for the redevelopment and regeneration of the area, concerns were raised over the highway implications of the proposals and the possibility that the removal of the viaduct at the railway station would create an increase in traffic congestion. The Panel suggested that a more aspirational approach should be taken in order to secure highway improvements as part of the action plan. The Panel was informed that subject to Cabinet approval of the draft, further consultation would take place with the public and interested parties before a final draft was prepared for approval by Cabinet and Council and subsequent submission to the Secretary of State.

As ward councillor, Councillor T.D Sanderson addressed the Panel on the report.

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be advised of the Panel's views on the Action Plan.

99. REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY REVIEW - CAMBRIDGESHIRE DEVELOPMENT STUDY

(Councillor P L E Bucknell, Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy was in attendance for this Item).

Further to Minute No 79/08 and with the aid of a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Head of Planning Services outlined the basis of a response to the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) by the Joint Cambridgeshire Review Panel (CReSSP) on the review of the Regional Spatial Strategy.

The Panel remained concerned over the proposals and their implications for Huntingdonshire, especially in relation to the possible development at Alconbury Airfield as identified in the report to EERA by their consultants.

The Panel supported the concept of development occurring where employment opportunities exist, avoiding past practices which had led to out-commuting from the District. Furthermore, the Panel felt that the proposal did not pay sufficient regard to the recent substantial improvement in public transport in the County. The Panel was reminded that the District Council would be commissioning its own independent consultants to inform the Council's response to the proposals and evidence at the subsequent examination in public of the regional plan proposals. The Panel therefore endorsed a recommendation by the Head of Planning Services that the District Council should adopt the following principles when responding to the EERA proposal -

- (i) that the emerging 'Cambridgeshire Growth Strategy' is under-pinned by a positive commitment to a highly sustainable approach that will both direct policy development and influence the proposed spatial pattern of development;
- (ii) that the emerging 'Cambridgeshire Growth Strategy' principally reinforces and builds upon the established sequential approach to the direction of further growth within Cambridgeshire;
- (iii) that the emerging 'Cambridgeshire Growth Strategy' acknowledges that there is limited capacity for additional growth above the established RSS levels and therefore that any targets for growth up to 2031 must reflect the lower rather than the higher NHPAU scenarios;
- (iv) that the emerging 'Cambridgeshire Growth Strategy' acknowledges the need to utilise the capacity of, and the opportunities created by, existing and committed transport and other infrastructure provision;
- (v) that the emerging 'Cambridgeshire Growth Strategy' acknowledges the essential needs to co-locate homes with

jobs. As the economic models favour jobs growth in the south of the County and acknowledge the challenges associated with the potential job creation in the north of the County, then that is where the majority of new homes need to be located;and

- (vi) that the emerging 'Cambridgeshire Growth Strategy' recognises that whilst the market towns could sustainably accommodate some further growth, and indeed such growth could aid their regeneration, these market towns do have environmental capacities that need to be respected.

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be formally notified of the Panel's views on the review of the Regional Spatial Strategy.

100. REVIEW OF DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE

(Councillor K Churchill, Special Adviser to the Cabinet was in attendance for this Item).

The Special Adviser to the Cabinet introduced the report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) of the Structure Review Working Party which had assessed the Council's democratic structure and formulated recommendations to help promote local democracy.

The Panel discussed each of the recommendations in turn. Although the Panel endorsed the majority of the recommendations, a number of amendments were proposed, and in some cases the recommendations were not supported in their entirety,

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be advised that the Panel supports the recommendations of the Democratic Structure Review Working Party, as set out in the report now submitted, subject to the following:-

- recommendation
- (b) - Not supported;
 - (h) - Not supported;
 - (o) - Subject to the deletion of the reference to an 'annual' refresh of the LSP in the recommendation;
 - (p) - Not supported but the Working Party invited to investigate further as part of a wider of the rules of debate at Council Meetings;
 - (w) - Subject to the times of meetings remaining at 4.00pm with flexibility to change,
 - (dd) - Subject to negotiation with partners,
 - (ee) - Subject to negotiation with

- (hh) - partners,
Subject to the arrangements not being extended to significant partnerships where other arrangements apply,
- (ii) - Deferral recommended for further consideration of funding options.

101. LOCAL GOVERNMENT & PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH ACT - IMPLICATIONS FOR OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

The Head of Democratic and Central Services updated the Panel with the aid of a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the legislative changes introduced by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 that affected overview and scrutiny with effect from 1st April 2009. These included a “councillor call for action”, which would allow any Member to refer a relevant local government matter to an Overview and Scrutiny Panel. In addition, any Member could request that a local government matter relating to his or her ward be included on the agenda for a meeting of the relevant Panel. Members were informed that the changes would require alterations to the Council Procedure Rules and the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules contained in the Constitution.

The Head of Democratic and Central Services also reported that the changes enabled overview and scrutiny committees to request information from a relevant County Council and partner bodies of that County Council, other than the Police Authority and affected the way that overview and scrutiny reports and recommendations were dealt with by Cabinet and partners.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Head of Democratic and Central Services be authorised, after consultation with the chairman of the relevant overview and scrutiny panel to determine whether a ‘councillor call for action’ should be included on a panel agenda and which panel is the most appropriate for the subject;
- (b) that the guide for the ‘councillor call for action’ as contained in Annex B of the report now submitted be approved; and
- (c) that the Corporate Governance Panel and Council be recommended to approve the changes to the Council Procedure Rules and the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules as set out in Annex A of the report now submitted.

102. ADJOURNMENT

Due to the lateness of the hour, it was agreed to defer consideration of the remaining items on the agenda.

103. EXPRESSIONS OF APPRECIATION

As this was likely to be the last meeting of the Panel in its current format as Service Support, the chairman thanked Members for their support during his term of office over the previous three years.

In reply, Members placed on record their appreciation of the way in which meetings had been chaired in an impartial and skilful way by the current chairman.

Chairman