

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING) held in Wren Room, Countryside Centre, Hinchingsbrooke Country Park on Tuesday, 9 June 2009.

PRESENT: Councillor P M D Godfrey – Chairman.

Councillors M G Baker, K M Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, P J Downes, P Godley, D Harty, Ms S L Kemp, M F Newman and J S Watt.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors D B Dew, J A Gray and A Hansard.

8. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Members to the first monthly meeting of the Environmental Well-Being Panel.

9. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 13th May 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

10. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillors P J Downes and D Harty declared a personal interest in Minute No. 13 as Members of Cambridgeshire County Council.

11. 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 Countywide Integrated Development Programme and Tariff was still being developed, but that it was hoped that the report would be available for the Panel to scrutinise in September.

In reply to a question, the Head of Planning Services reported that the A14 Statutory Orders consultation was delayed and that an announcement on the publication of the Order was anticipated in the near future.

The Panel requested sight of the Site Options Gypsy and Travellers Development Plan Document, which it was hoped would be available for the Panel to scrutinise in October.

**12. REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY SINGLE ISSUE REVIEW
ACCOMMODATION FOR GYPSY AND TRAVELLERS AND
TRAVELLING SHOWPEOPLE IN THE EAST OF ENGLAND**

(Councillor D Dew, Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport was in attendance for this Item).

Following an introduction by the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport the Panel considered a joint report by the Heads of Planning and Housing Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) summarising the Council's response to the Government's proposed changes to the draft policy put forward by the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA), for Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation. The Panel also received a copy of the letter from the Planning Policy Manager to Go-East, outlining the comments of the District Council on the proposed changes to the draft policy in the East of England Plan.

The Panel was advised that the Cambridgeshire Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment had been acknowledged as national best practice and the evidence had not been challenged by EERA. However the proposed change now required provision of 25 pitches at the upper limit of the range suggested by the Cambridgeshire GTAA as a minimum.

The Panel was informed of the concerns with regard to a proposed change to introduce County requirements for transit pitches and provision for travelling show people by 2011, as the requirements had been introduced at a late stage in the process on the basis of limited evidence which had not been subject to full participation and scrutiny. In response to questions, the Head of Planning Services acknowledged that transit sites would have to be managed to prevent them from becoming occupied as permanent sites and that the late addition of the requirement for transit and travelling show people provision might delay the adoption of the Plan which would affect the Council's ability to resist unsuitable sites for which planning permission was sought.

It was reported that the District Council's comments had been sent to EERA before the closing date with a final announcement anticipated later in the year. The Head of Planning Services undertook to report back to the Panel once EERA's response had been received.

13. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

(Councillor A Hansard, Executive Councillor for Resources and Policy was in attendance for this Item).

The Executive Councillor for Resources and Policy introduced a report by the Head of People, Performance and Partnerships (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the performance of the authority against the priority objectives for environmental well-being identified in 'Growing Success', the Council's Corporate Plan. The report had already been presented to a recent meeting of the Corporate Plan Working Group which comprised the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

In noting that all of the well-being targets had been met or exceeded the Panel questioned whether targets were sufficiently stretching. Having regard to the absence in the report of performance measures for the current year, the Panel requested a report to its next meeting on how performance targets were set against achievement of corporate plan objectives.

RESOLVED

that the report be endorsed for submission to the Cabinet.

14. CARBON MANAGEMENT PLAN

(Councillor J A Gray, Executive Councillor for Environment and Information Technology, was in attendance for this Item).

The Executive Councillor for Environment and Information Technology introduced a report by the Head of Environmental Management (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the adoption by the Council of a Carbon Management Plan. The Panel was advised that the Plan proposed an aspirational target of reducing carbon dioxide emissions by the Council of 30% over the next five years. In order to achieve this, a series of projects had been identified with short pay-back periods that would enable the Council to make energy and efficiency savings. Further projects were required however, if the target was to be achieved.

Having regard to the relative pay back periods of the various proposals, Members questioned the reason why the planned wind power project in St. Ivo Leisure Centre, was proceeding as the pay back period was twice as long as other schemes. It was reported, however that 50% of the funding for the proposed wind turbine already had been secured and it was hoped that further grants also could be obtained.

Details were presented of the funding opportunities available to implement the first tranche of projects, savings from which could be re-invested into the next stage of projects.

The Panel was informed that behavioural change was important if the savings identified were to be achieved. In that respect the Panel suggested that incentives could be offered to encourage employees to car share, and the importance of the green force scheme to promote 'green' awareness across the Council was recognised. Having regard to staff travel accounting for 6% of the Council's baseline CO² emissions, the Panel was informed that this did not include travel by Members and it was suggested that this be included in the statistics in future.

The Panel acknowledged that the Council's carbon emissions could be affected by external decisions beyond the Council's control and that there could be conflicts between the achievement of differing targets, where a saving in one service might increase carbon emissions elsewhere.

Members welcomed the financial savings that could be achieved by the measures proposed but queried whether these had been included in the financial forecast for the Council's future budget that had been

prepared by the Head of Financial Services. Finally it was noted that progress towards achievement of the Carbon Management Plan targets would be included in future performance monitoring reports.

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be advised of the Panel's views on the proposed Carbon Management Plan.

15. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY - REMITS AND STUDIES

With the assistance of a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel considered its role and remit and the future programme of studies.

In response to a question, the Panel was advised that the Section 106 Working Group would be considering the implications of the Community Infrastructure Levy when guidelines on its introduction became available.

Having noted that there were no other outstanding studies, it was suggested that possible subjects for investigation were the planning process for the determination of planning applications, planning enforcement and waste disposal arrangements. Under the circumstances the Head of Democratic and Central Services was asked to submit proposals for studies on the subjects identified for the next meeting. An update also was requested by Members on the present position with regard to cycling provision in Huntingdonshire following an earlier investigation commissioned by the Service Support Panel.

16. SCRUTINY

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

In response to a request for further information on implications for overview and scrutiny of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. Members were informed that an update would be provided at the next meeting of the Panel.

Having regard to the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan, Members were informed that the outcome of the public consultation would be presented to a future meeting of the Panel.

Chairman