

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING) held in the Wren Room, Countryside Centre, Hinchingsbrooke Country Park on Tuesday, 8 September 2009.

- PRESENT: Councillor P M D Godfrey – Chairman.
- Councillors Mrs M Banerjee, P J Downes, P M D Godfrey, P Godley, D Harty and M F Newman.
- APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors M G Baker, K M Baker and J S Watt.
- IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors D B Dew, J A Gray and R G Tuplin.

26. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 14th July 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

27. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

28. 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 A14 statutory orders consultation was likely to be the subject of a briefing for all Members due to the importance of the issue.

29. GREAT FEN MASTER PLAN

(Councillor D B Dew, Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport was in attendance for this Item. Councillor R G Tuplin of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) was also in attendance).

Further to Minute No 09/20 and following an introduction by the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport, the Panel considered the draft illustrative master plan for the Great Fen Project (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). The Panel welcomed the production of the master plan as the next stage in the planning process for the Great Fen Project and expressed its ongoing support for the Council's involvement in the venture, which would

enable the views of the local community to be represented and provide a democratic focus for the project.

Although Members recognised that further detailed work would need to be undertaken to produce an action plan for the project, concerns were raised over the absence of any reference to business planning and long term financial forecasting in the document. The Panel had questions about the financial viability of the visitor centre, and having regard to the latter's location expressed concern over the condition of B660 access road, and the need for its improvement in light of the anticipated visitor numbers.

The Panel also was anxious to ensure that there would be no long term financial implications for the Council arising from the cessation of the grants awarded to the project. Members were mindful of the danger of creating aspirations through the consultation process that it might be difficult to fund in the long term.

The Panel was encouraged to note that some local land owners who initially had not been in favour of the project had since approached partners to discuss the possibility of changing their farming methods in line with the project's vision.

The Panel also welcomed a suggestion by the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport that a future meeting of the Panel be held at the Great Fen, to enable Members to visualise the project and learn at first hand about future plans.

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be advised of the Panel's views on the Great Fen Master Plan.

30. THE HUNTINGDONSHIRE CORE STRATEGY 2008 - THE INSPECTOR'S BINDING REPORT / ADOPTION PROCESS

(Councillor D B 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 report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which provided information on the Inspector's conclusions regarding the soundness of the development plan document, following his examination of the submitted Core Strategy. The Panel was pleased to note that the majority of changes to the strategy had been proposed by the Council, and any changes imposed by the Inspector were negligible.

Members congratulated the Head of Planning Services and his team on their efforts in producing the strategy, and noted that the next stage in the process would be the Development Management Submission Document which would be subject to consultation in due course.

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be advised that the Panel have no specific comments on the Core Strategy to bring to its attention.

31. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the press and public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to an individual/organisation and is likely to reveal their identity/terms of contract.

32. SOUTH STREET PUBLIC CONVENIENCE, ST NEOTS

(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 South Street public conveniences in St. Neots.

The Panel were apprised of the poor condition of the public conveniences and their inappropriate location in a conservation area. Notwithstanding the existence of two other public conveniences in St. Neots, a local Member stressed that the South Street facility was well used by the public.

The Panel concurred with the proposal that the Council should not incur any further expenditure on improvements to the public conveniences but suggested that St. Neots Town Council be offered the option of improving and maintaining this facility before any final decision was made as to their future by the Cabinet.

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be advised of the Panel's views on the South Street public conveniences in St. Neots.

33. RE-ADMISSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the press and public be readmitted to the meeting.

34. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

(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 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 three Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

The Panel was pleased to note that all but one of the indicators where statistics were available were positive.

35. WORK PLAN STUDIES AND WORKING GROUP TEMPLATES

The Panel considered and noted a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) reviewing the Panel's programme of studies and informing Members of studies being undertaken by the other Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

36. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL PROGRESS

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

In so doing, the Panel requested sight of the Minutes of future Joint Accountability Committee meetings and information about the cycleway planned alongside the St. Ives guided bus way. Councillor Downes also undertook to investigate with the County Council the potential problem of the cycleway in Brampton Road crossing the entrance to the new car park under the A14 viaduct.

37. SCRUTINY

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

Chairman