

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, 10 November 2009.

PRESENT: Councillor P M D Godfrey – Chairman.

Councillors M G Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, P J Downes, J J Dutton, P Godley, D Harty, M F Newman and J S Watt.

APOLOGY: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor K M Baker.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors D B Dew and T D Sanderson.

47. MINUTES

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

48. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor P J Downes, J J Dutton and D Harty declared personal interests in Minute No. 51 as Members of Cambridgeshire County Council.

49. 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 requested sight of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment which it was hoped would be available for the Panel to scrutinise in January.

50. 10:10 CLIMATE CHANGE CAMPAIGN

The Panel considered a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) by the Head of Environmental Management seeking the Council's support for the 10:10 Climate Change Campaign. The Panel was advised that the campaign aimed to achieve a 10% cut in carbon emissions in 2010 which was in line with the Council's Carbon Management Plan which planned to reduce carbon emissions by 30% over five years.

The Panel noted that mechanisms were in place to monitor the Council's carbon emissions which would be measured against the baseline figure in the carbon management plan allowing reductions to

be recorded. However it was acknowledged that it would be more difficult to measure the reduction in carbon emissions of individuals and businesses which signed up to the campaign.

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be advised that the Panel endorse the recommendation that the Council register its support for the 10:10 Climate Change Campaign.

51. CAR PARKING REVIEW

*(Councillor D B Dew, Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport was in attendance for this item. Councillor T D Sanderson, Chairman of the Car Parking Working Party was also in attendance).
(Councillor J S Watt declared a personal interest in the management of the car park in Yaxley arising from his business interests.)*

Following an introduction by the Chairman of the Car Parking Working Party, the Panel considered a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) by the Head of Planning Services on the findings of the Car Parking Working Party.

With regard to the recommendations proposed, the Panel had no objection to the intention to reduce the number of short stay spaces at the Riverside Car Park in Huntingdon due to lack of demand. In respect of Ramsey, the Panel welcomed the suggestion of additional parking provision in Mews Close in view of Members' concerns over the number of vehicles parking on the High Street. Further to this, it was reported that County Council officers were considering limiting parking on the Great Whyte and introducing parking enforcement on the High Street.

Having been informed that vehicles with low emissions were eligible for reduced rate season tickets, the Panel requested further details of the number of tickets issued with reductions. Members also questioned whether future parking charges could be set in line with vehicle emissions rather than length of time parked but were informed that the technology was not yet available for this to be accomplished.

Having noted that parking at the new 'Park & Ride' site at St. Ives for the guided bus way was planned to be free of charge, the Panel voiced concerns that this could have a detrimental effect on town centre parking, as drivers might opt to use a free car park given its proximity to the town centre. It was feared that this would have an adverse effect on overall car parking income and could also impact on the number of spaces available for users of the guided bus. Members felt that the County Council should be urged to reconsider their decision to permit parking in the car park free of charge.

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be advised of the Panel's views on the car parking review.

52. TRANSIT SITES FOR GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS

(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 joint report by the Head of Planning and Housing Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the requirement for Councils to make provision for travellers' transit sites.

Members were informed that the need for transit provision in Huntingdonshire had been assessed as 8/10 pitches. The Panel acknowledged that the early provision of a transit site would help in reducing or eliminating the number of unauthorised encampments which took place currently.

The Head of Housing Services explained that the Gypsy and Traveller Site Management Good Practice Guide indicated that transit sites were intended to cater for gypsies and travellers who wished or needed to reside in their own caravan accommodation in an area on a short term basis. Periods ranging from an overnight stay to an average maximum period of around six weeks were catered for, although this could sometimes be extended to up to three months where there was sufficient capacity to meet overall short term demand, particularly where there was no permanent residential accommodation available.

RESOLVED

that the report be endorsed for submission to the Cabinet.

53. THE RSS REVIEW STATUTORY CONSULTATION RESPONSE

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

With the aid of a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Head of Planning Services informed the Panel of the current EERA consultation in respect of the ongoing review of the regional spatial strategy and the potential implications of four growth scenarios for the future of Huntingdonshire for the period up to 2031. Members agreed that the only scenario that was sustainable was for a continuation of the pace of growth in the recently approved core strategy to 2026. In the event of the other scenarios being approved which each proposed greater scale of development, Members were of the view that the result would be additional commuting for employment and an adverse impact on the local infrastructure which could not be accommodated.

In response to a question, the Head of Planning Services reported that Council officers were due shortly to meet with the new owners of Alconbury Airfield to discuss the future of the site.

RESOLVED

that the Panel endorse the recommendations contained in

the report for submission to the Cabinet.

54. HUNTINGDON WEST AREA ACTION PLAN SUBMISSION DOCUMENT

(Councillor D B Dew, Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport and Councillor T D Sanderson, Ward Councillor, were in attendance for this item).

The Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport introduced a report by the Head of Planning Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the draft proposed submission Huntingdon West Area Action Plan.

Although the Panel welcomed the proposals for the redevelopment and regeneration of the area, a number of Members remained sceptical over the highway implications of the proposals. In response, the Panel was informed that the modelling for the link road had taken into account the proposals for development and the Highways Authority were satisfied that the proposed level of growth was sustainable.

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be advised that the Panel have no specific comments on the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan submission document to bring to its attention.

55. COUNTY WIDE AND INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME AND TARIFF

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

With the assistance of a report by the Head of Planning Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel considered the draft Cambridgeshire Integrated Development Programme.

The Panel was advised that the programme brought together the various planning documents available to identify infrastructure needs on a sub-regional basis. It was reported that the exercise had been useful in determining strategic and local infrastructure needs along with levels of tariff in viability terms that could be applied in Cambridgeshire and the document would be an essential tool to guide future development.

RESOLVED

that the report be endorsed for submission to the Cabinet.

56. 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 being undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

In noting that the development management process review was progressing well, Members were asked to consider further possible subjects for investigation. It was agreed that this matter would be discussed further at the next Panel meeting.

57. 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 and issues that had been discussed previously.

In so doing, the Panel noted that Anglian Water's Collection Manager was yet to respond to the list of questions provided.

With regard to cycling, the Panel requested an update as to the status of the Perry Village Cycle Route.

58. 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 question, the Panel was informed that an article was being published in District-Wide for the appointment of co-opted Members to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels which would be delivered to households shortly.

Chairman