

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 December 2009.

PRESENT: Councillor P M D Godfrey – Chairman.

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

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors M G Baker, K M Baker and A Monk.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors D B Dew and J J Dutton.

59. MINUTES

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

60. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

61. 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, Members were informed that due to the length of time taken to finalise the A14 statutory orders consultation report, the Head of Planning Services would circulate the report to all Members prior to its consideration at the Council meeting on 22nd December 2009. Members were invited to submit comments or requests for further information to officers in advance of that meeting.

62. GREEN HOUSE PROJECT

The Panel considered a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) by the Head of Environmental Management providing an update on the District Council led retro-fitting demonstration project for private housing in the District.

The Head of Environmental Management advised the Panel of the importance of addressing carbon emissions, with the Green House project aiming to achieve cost-effective retrofit at an affordable level for local residents. Two houses had been purchased to demonstrate practical and appropriate cost-effective retrofit energy efficiency,

renewable energy and water efficiency measures at appropriate levels in the District. It was hoped that the works on the retrofit would be completed in May 2010, with a launch event proposed to coincide with World Environment Week. It was reported that a series of events would be held over the summer and autumn in 2010 targeting key stakeholders.

Members felt that as saving money was likely to be residents' primary concern, the financial savings achieved by the project would need to be publicised along with the associated carbon savings. It was felt that a cost benefit analysis should be included in future promotional material, including details of the projected pay back period.

In response to questions, the Panel was informed that the property in St. Ives would be used as the main exemplar, showcasing how emissions could be reduced through various affordable measures. This property would be open for individuals and organisations to view. Although this property would not be inhabited, it was explained that savings could still be measured. The possibility of letting the St. Neots property to tenants was being considered.

It was agreed that a visit to the properties for Members of the Panel would be arranged prior to the formal launch in June 2010.

63. DEVELOPMENT BRIEF OLD FIRE STATION, ST NEOTS

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

(Councillor D Harty declared a personal interest as a member of St. Neots Town Council.)

Following an introduction by the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport, the Panel considered a report by the Head of Planning Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the redevelopment opportunities of land in and around the Old Fire Station and depot, Huntingdon Street, St. Neots. The Panel was advised that this was a redundant site which needed design guidance to aid with its marketing. Members acknowledged the lack of leisure infrastructure within St. Neots and agreed that this could potentially offer a key site for leisure development. It was reported that ideas for the site had been discussed with both the Town Council and St. Neots Town Centre Initiative and Members were assured that this site would be developed in a manner appropriate to its town centre location.

The Head of Planning Services informed the Panel that there were complications over access rights within the site which it was hoped would be resolved before the site was marketed.

Overall, the panel welcomed the development brief and had no objections to the proposals.

64. DEVELOPMENT BRIEF CHEQUERS COURT, HUNTINGDON

(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 redevelopment opportunities in and around the Chequers Court shopping area in the centre of Huntingdon. The Panel acknowledged that redevelopment of Chequers Court would be necessary for the town centre to be re-invigorated, with a rationalisation of car parking being a key component for this area. The design brief aimed to show what could be done in the area and two potential scenarios had been identified.

Concerns were raised by Members over the proposal to remove the petrol filling station, although it was reported that this would be a commercial decision beyond the control of the Council. The Head of Planning Services reported that the availability of land within the town centre was limited and needed to be used to encourage people to come into the town to shop. Members recognised that congestion on the inner ring road was a cause for concern but were informed that if the modelling for the A14 improvements was correct then traffic on the ring road could be reduced by up to 50% which would provide scope for the improvement of the town centre roads.

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be advised of the Panel's support for the development brief for Chequers Court, Huntingdon, subject to concerns over the possible removal of the petrol filling station.

65. ST NEOTS HEALTH CHECK

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

The Head of Planning Services acquainted the Group with the purpose and process of the St. Neots Health Check undertaken by his division. The Health Check had explored St. Neots holistically and identified what could be done to improve the town in line with its predicted growth. The consultation process undertaken had created a vision for St. Neots. A master plan now would be developed to deliver this vision and would provide the evidence for future funding bids with the Council steering the master planning process.

The Panel commended the work that had been undertaken to date and expressed its support for the Council's involvement in the project.

66. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Panel received 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 as 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.

The Panel noted that NI 185 (identify opportunities to reduce CO2 emissions from the Council's own operations) was the only indicator

off target which it was anticipated would be back on target for the next quarter.

In response to a question, Members were advised that the Corporate Plan Working Group reviewed the Council's performance against predefined objectives, with any performance related issues being reported back to the Working Group via the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Panels.

Members questioned whether this Panel would monitor the implementation of the environmental proposals endorsed by the Cabinet, it was agreed that this would be discussed further at the next meeting of the Panel.

67. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REMITS AND STUDIES

The Panel considered a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which intended to remind Members of their remit due to the tendency for the Panel to focus on planning issues. Members were urged to consider their brief and to raise any issues that they would like to explore further.

68. 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.

Having regard to the subject of the headline debate at the Council meeting on 2nd December 2009 on how Council's could encourage others to reduce their carbon footprint, the Panel agreed to discuss at its next meeting what action the Council itself might take and the impact on the work programme of the environment forum.

Having regard to the length of time that had elapsed with regard to the implementation of a cycleway in Perry funded through Section 106 Agreements, the Panel requested an update at its next meeting.

69. 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's attention was drawn to a response from Anglian Water's Collection Manager to a list of questions provided with regard to the problems of foul sewerage flooding in the St. Audrey's Lane area of St. Ives. Members acknowledged that there appeared to be little further that could be achieved currently with Anglian Water not prepared to attend a Panel Meeting. However Officers were asked to continue to monitor the situation.

70. 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