

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, 13 April 2010.

PRESENT: Councillor P M D Godfrey – Chairman.

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

Mr D Hopkins

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillor A Monk and Phillips.

102. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Panel held on 2nd and 9th March 2010 were approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

103. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

104. 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.

Members were advised that the report on 'Street Naming and Numbering - Charging for Some Services' would not now be submitted to Cabinet as a comprehensive review of this subject was being undertaken. The final report would be presented to the Panel when available.

105. CABINET FEEDBACK

The Panel received and noted reports from the Cabinet detailing their deliberations on the Car Park Review 2009 and the Development Management Process respectively in response of the Panel's recommendations.

106. MASTERPLAN FOR GREAT FEN

Further to Minute No. 09/29, the Panel considered a report by the Director of Environmental and Community Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the Great Fen Masterplan which had now been approved by the Project Steering Committee. The

Director stressed that this was a spatial plan that indicated how the project might be developed by the partner organisations.

In response to a question concerning the financial implications, the Panel was informed that the Council's exposure to the project was limited to £20,000 per annum for the next five years under the terms of the collaboration agreement, although the Council could withdraw from the Steering Committee at any time. If the Council chose to do so, the project would be continued by the other partners with the Wildlife Trust and Natural England having secured the ownership of a large proportion of the land required.

The Panel was advised that the loan being approved by the Cabinet to the Wildlife Trust represented a commercial business decision between partners with shared objectives. The loan would be used to purchase land which would fulfil District Council objectives and aspects of the Masterplan.

The Panel drew attention to the lack of reference to flood defences throughout the Masterplan but was informed that three flood storage areas had been allocated throughout the Great Fen, with work on this aspect of the project being undertaken by the Middle Level Commission.

Members were informed that further detailed work would be undertaken by the partners to produce action plans to take forward those aspects of the project for which they were responsible, each would have to consider the business planning and financial implications of their proposals and, for this reason, an overarching business plan was not appropriate.

The Panel agreed to a suggestion that a site visit to the Great Fen be convened with representatives of partner groups and the project manager present to enable Members to view how the land is managed and to discuss the project with partners. The Panel also requested bi-annual reports from the Director of Environmental and Community Services on the progress of the Great Fen Project and details as to the cost of the Council's involvement in the project by way of officer time.

RESOLVED

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

107. 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.

In discussing the summary of waste disposal arrangements for the District, the Panel has requested further information on future plans for waste disposal and the costs associated with those plans.

The Panel agreed to defer identification of future study topics until after the Annual Meeting of the Council when the membership of the Panel would be reviewed.

108. 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, it was reported that progress was being made on the Perry Village cycle route, with route options due to be considered at the next Huntingdonshire Traffic Management Area Joint Committee meeting.

109. SCRUTINY

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

Chairman