

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING) held in the CIVIC SUITE , PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 8 June 2010.

PRESENT: Councillor P M D Godfrey – Chairman.

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

Messrs D Hopkins and M Phillips.

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors I C Bates, K J Churchill and D B Dew.

6. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Panel held on 13th April 2010 and 19th May 2010 were approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

7. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

8. 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 public conveniences which was scheduled to be considered in July was in response to the petition submitted at the April meeting of the Council.

Having regard to the Site Options Gypsy and Travellers Development Plan Document, the Head of Planning Services informed the Panel that this item was likely to be delayed until further guidance emerged on the Government's announcement to scrap the Regional Spatial Strategies which had determined the targets for pitch provision for gypsies and travellers to be provided by local authorities.

9. RAMSEY MARKET TOWN TRANSPORT STRATEGY

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

The Panel considered a report by the Head of Planning Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) seeking approval of

the first Ramsey Market Town Transport Strategy, which had been compiled in conjunction with the Huntingdonshire Traffic Management Area Joint Committee.

The strategy had identified the key transport issues facing Ramsey and outlined a programme of transport schemes to address the transport needs of the town and surrounding villages over the next five years. In response to a question, Members were advised that schemes would be funded from a variety of sources, with the strategy providing the evidence base required to request contributions from developers. It was reported that the majority of the funding for schemes would be required from the County Council as the highway authority which would also be responsible for future maintenance.

The Panel acknowledged that on-street parking was a particular concern in parts of Ramsey as it slowed traffic and made junctions difficult to negotiate. It was reported that a lack of enforcement had resulted in inconsiderate and illegal parking having become commonplace, although discussions were taking place on the potential introduction of civil enforcement in the future.

Members questioned the extent to which the proposed strategy could be funded via Section 106 contributions from the recent Tesco development in Ramsey. In response, it was reported that the principal contribution was intended to have been the provision of traffic signals at the High Street/Great White junction, but this had not been supported by the Huntingdonshire Traffic Management Area Joint Committee.

RESOLVED

that the report be endorsed for submission to the Cabinet.

10. CAR PARKING ORDERS

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

The Panel considered a report by the Chief Officers Management Team (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which outlined the responses received following the advertisement of proposals to introduce new Orders governing the use of car parks operated by the Council.

The Panel also received a briefing paper (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) showing the financial impact of the approved MTP in the context of income from parking fees at Riverside Park, St Neots with 38 spaces free of charge for two hours, compared with the alternative scenario suggested by the Panel of all spaces at Riverside Park being free for three hours.

The Panel discussed the responses received which opposed the introduction of charges for parking at Riverside Park, St. Neots. In view of the level of publicity that this had generated in the local media, the Panel acknowledged that there had been ample opportunity for Members of the public to comment. The Panel therefore saw no reason why a local inquiry should be required to explore the

objections raised in greater detail, as it was felt that this would add further delay and cost to the process. While Members expressed some sympathy with the views expressed by the public, the Panel also recognised the need for the Council to generate additional income to meet the anticipated shortfall in the Council's budget.

With regard to the proposed introduction of parking charges at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, Members recognised that the Car Park was being used by motorists working and visiting the nearby hospital and commuting via the railway station. With that in mind, the Panel drew attention to the need to ensure that the concession of free parking for members of the Friends of the Country Park was not used simply to enable motorists to continue to park at the country park without charge.

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be recommended to consider the objections received and to determine the orders, as advertised, without holding a local inquiry.

11. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The Panel considered 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. Having received the comments of the Corporate Plan Working Group, the Panel noted that the target for the key measure relating to the tonnes of Co2 saved from year one carbon management projects had not been achieved. Members were advised that this could be attributed to the fact that not all of the Leisure Centres had installed new combined heat and power systems as originally planned. At present, only the Huntingdon Centre had the system installed and a decision had been made to review the system before rolling it out to the other Leisure Centres.

Having had their attention drawn to the failure to reduce the amount of power consumed over the past year because the server virtualisation project had slipped, Members questioned the need for the engagement of an external adviser to assist with the procurement of a virtualisation solution. The Panel was assured that the Corporate Plan Working Group would closely monitor the usage of external consultants due to the associated cost implications.

Members also requested details as to the amount of Co2 saved through the move into the Council's new headquarters.

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be recommended to note the content of the report by the Head of People, Performance and Partnerships.

12. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2009/10

Members have received and noted a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) summarising the Panel's activities over

the past year.

13. WORK PLAN STUDIES

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.

Further information was requested on the work of the Flood Forum, which had been established as a result of a previous scrutiny study.

Having noted that there were no outstanding studies, it was reported that Members had previously suggested possible subjects for investigation of planning conservation, rural transport and land use for agricultural purposes in the context of planning policies and its contribution to the local economy. It was noted that South Cambridgeshire District Council had expressed an interest in taking part in a joint scrutiny study on the latter subject. Members considered that planning conservation was the most suitable topic for the Panel's next study and a study programme was requested for the next meeting.

RESOLVED

that Councillors M G Baker, P Godley, D Harty and Messrs D Hopkins and M Phillips be appointed to a working group to investigate the subject of planning conservation.

14. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY - REMITS, ROLES 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.

In reviewing the Panel's progress on issues that had been discussed previously, Members were pleased to note that consultations on the Perry village cycle route were ongoing, with a recommendation expected imminently. Having regard to flooding in the St. Audrey's Lane area of St. Ives, Councillor Davies reported that he was investigating the ongoing problems personally with the aid of specialist advice and former Anglian Water employees.

In response to a question, the Panel was advised that an update on the Council's carbon footprint reduction was expected at the September meeting of the Panel.

15. 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

