

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SOCIAL WELL-BEING) held in the Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 1 November 2011.

PRESENT: Councillor S J Criswell – Chairman.

Councillors S Akthar, K M Baker,
Mrs J A Dew, J J Dutton, Mrs P A Jordan,
S M Van De Kerkhove, Mrs D C Reynolds
and R J West.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillor I C Bates and Mr R Coxhead and Mrs M Nicholas.

51. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 4th October 2011 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

52. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor K M Baker declared a personal interest in Minute No. 54 by virtue of being a Trustee of Shopmobility, Huntingdon.

Councillor B S Chapman declared a personal interest in Minute No. 54 by virtue of being a volunteer for the Huntingdonshire Citizens Advice Bureau.

Councillor J J Dutton declared a personal interest in Minute No. 54 by virtue of being a Director of the Huntingdonshire Citizens Advice Bureau and his membership of the Hunts Forum of Voluntary Organisations.

Councillor S Akthar declared a personal interest in Minute No. 60 as Vice-Chairman of the Huntingdon Neighbourhood Forum.

53. 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) which had been prepared by the Executive Leader of the Council for the period 1st November 2011 to 29th February 2012. In noting the addition of the item entitled Voluntary Sector Support, the Panel requested sight of the report prior to its submission to the Cabinet.

54. VOLUNTARY SECTOR

(Councillor B S Chapman, Executive Councillor for Customer Services, and Councillor T D Sanderson, Executive Councillor for Healthy and Active Communities, were in attendance for

consideration of this item).

Consideration was given to a report containing the findings of the Voluntary Sector Working Group (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). The Working Group had been tasked by the Panel to investigate the social value of the functions performed by the voluntary organisations that have Service Level Agreements (SLA) with the Council. It had received evidence from all the organisations and Members had concluded that they made a valuable contribution to the Council's aims. The Council's financial challenges were recognised and the recommendations made took them into account.

In light of the Council's current financial position, Councillor Mrs D C Reynolds restated that when considering the terms of any future agreements the Council should take into account whether services were offered on a District-wide basis.

The Head of Environmental and Community Health Services drew the Panel's attention to the procedure the Council would have to employ if it were to continue to procure the functions contained in the SLAs. The Council would first have to decide to continue with SLAs or return to awarding grants. The procurement rules in respect of SLAs were very prescriptive and included the publication of advertisements in the European Journal. Interested organisations would then be required to submit bids, which would be assessed against specified criteria. Members were also informed that an indicative budget would be sought from the Cabinet in January 2012 for the 2013/14 financial year in order to comply with the procurement rules and contractual obligations that the Council had with the voluntary organisations under the existing Service Level Agreements.

Councillor B S Chapman addressed the Panel on the work of the Huntingdonshire Citizens Advice Bureau in offering support and advice on a wide range of issues to Huntingdonshire residents. In order to take forward their discussions, the Panel requested the Working Group to investigate the potential financial impact that any budgetary cuts would have on the District Council. In addition, the Working Group was tasked with prioritising the activities that were provided through the SLAs. Councillor B S Chapman, in his capacity as Executive Councillor for Customer Services, reported that some preliminary work on this had already been undertaken by the Head of Customer Services and offered his assistance at a future Working Group meeting. Councillor T D Sanderson, Executive Councillor for Healthy and Active Communities also offered to assist the Working Group with its investigations.

55. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of the authority.

56. FUNDING FOR CCTV

(Councillor T D Sanderson, Executive Councillor for Healthy and

Active Communities and Councillors Mrs B E Boddington, P L E Bucknell, B S Chapman, P G Mitchell and A H Williams were in attendance for consideration of this item).

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Operations (a copy of which is appended in the annex to the Minute Book) updating Members on the options for the future of the CCTV service. The Head of Operations, Streetscene Manager and the Executive Councillor for Healthy and Active Communities presented the Panel with information on the service, which included an outline of the budgetary savings achieved to date, the commitments received from Partners and options for changes to the way it operated.

The Panel was acquainted with some of the budgetary implications of the options. Having discussed a number of matters including the costs associated with removing CCTV cameras, the obstacles to utilising redundant cameras as a deterrent and the impact of them on perpetrators of crime, Members expressed concern that there might be an adverse effect on crime prevention. The retrospective use of CCTV footage by the Police to obtain convictions and the proposed terms of the Service Level Agreement with Town Councils were also referred to by Members. Having regard to the latter, the Panel suggested that a year's notice period should be specified for the termination of the Agreement.

Members concluded that the current proposal should be accepted in order to preserve the service in the short term but that any additional funding obtained over that already identified within the report should be utilised to extend the service's proactive role.

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be recommended to

- a) note the estimate of potential income and savings for the CCTV service for 2012/13 and beyond;
- b) approve funding for CCTV for 2012/13 in principle on the basis that contributions from Partners would be forthcoming and staff reductions made to reduce the overall financial burden on the Council to £164k, excluding external re-charges;
- c) approve the draft SLA with Town Councils appended to the report now submitted,
- d) that subject to the Cabinet being able to identify alternative savings to meet the additional cost of funding the CCTV service in 2012/13, the recommendations as set out in the report now submitted be endorsed by the Panel; and
- e) use any additional funding obtained above that already identified within the report to enhance the service's proactive role.

57. RE-ADMITTANCE OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the public be re-admitted to the meeting.

58. THE HEALTH IMPLICATIONS OF THE NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Environmental and Community Health Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the health implications of the night-time economy in Huntingdonshire. The Head of Environmental and Community Health Services outlined the relationship between the night-time economy and health and drew Members' attention to trends in alcohol related health matters that had been identified by the Strategic Needs Assessment undertaken on behalf of the Huntingdonshire Community Safety Partnership (HCSP).

It was reported that whilst there was no specific data relating to binge drinking, the HCSP was now in receipt of data from Hinchingsbrooke Hospital about alcohol related admissions in respect of the location, timing and frequency of incidents. Given that the information sharing practices had been introduced in February 2011, the Head of Environmental and Community Health Services reported that only 29 incidents of alcohol related assaults, which were likely to be associated with the night-time economy, had been recorded to date. Members were advised to treat the figures with caution as they were not regarded as being statistically reliable.

In response to a question by a Member, it was reported that alcohol misuse in Huntingdonshire related primarily to domestic and social misuse outside of the night-time economy. Evidence suggested that individuals who misused alcohol tended to be middle aged and older white males.

Owing to the fact that little information was currently available, Members agreed to continue to monitor the health implications of the night-time economy in Huntingdonshire during their annual scrutiny of the HCSP.

59. ANNUAL EQUALITY PROGRESS REPORT

With the aid of a report prepared by the Senior Policy Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) Members were acquainted with progress towards the achievement of the Council's Single Equality Scheme and its associated action plan. In introducing the report, the Senior Policy Officer reported on the legislative background to the Single Equality Scheme, which had been introduced by The Equality Act 2010. Members' attention was drawn to the achievements made against the Action Plan. Of the 51 actions contained within the Plan, 47 had been completed or were ongoing. Of the 19 Equality Impact Assessments undertaken over the course of the 2010/11 financial year, 5 had been prompted by proposed budgetary cuts to some of the Council's services.

Members were reminded of the provisions of the Equality Framework

for Local Government and informed that an external assessment of the Council's equalities arrangements would be undertaken in February 2012. The assessment would seek to validate the Council's current status as an "Achieving" Council and representatives of the Panel would be requested to take part in the assessment.

In response to a question by Councillor R J West, it was reported that training on equality matters had previously been delivered to Members and that a further programme would be rolled out in due course.

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be recommended to

- (a) note progress with the Single Equality Scheme Action Plan and the findings from the Equality Impact Assessments conducted during 2010/11; and
- (b) note that an external review (Diversity Peer Challenge) will take place on the 28th and 29th February 2012 and be aware of the role of Members during the review.

60. NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUMS - CONSULTATION RESPONSES

(County Councillor Sir P Brown and Councillor P L E Bucknell, Chairmen of the Huntingdon and Ramsey Neighbourhood Forums respectively, were in attendance for consideration of this item).

(At this point (9:00pm) Councillor Mrs J A Dew left the meeting).

Pursuant to Minute No. 11/36 and with the aid of a report prepared by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel was acquainted with the responses received from District Councillors, relevant County Councillors and Town and Parish Councils to consultation on the Neighbourhood Forums in Huntingdonshire.

County Councillor Sir P Brown and Councillor P L E Bucknell, Chairmen of the Huntingdon and Ramsey Neighbourhood Forums respectively, addressed the Panel on their experiences of the Neighbourhood Forums to date. Both commented that their Forums were in the early stages of development and that efforts were being made to enhance the way they worked to suit their local areas. County Councillor Sir P Brown reported that the Huntingdon Neighbourhood Forum had met the previous week, when a number of wide ranging issues had been discussed. Public attendance levels had increased and it was considered that this was a result of the issues which had been raised for discussion at the meeting. In his concluding remarks, County Councillor Sir P Brown commented that the Forums could be utilised as a vehicle for the delivery of the Localism agenda whilst at the same time providing an opportunity to reshape public services and to enhance public participation levels. Councillor P L E Bucknell concurred with the comments made and expressed support for the devolution of decision making powers to the Neighbourhood Forums.

In opening up the Panel's discussions, the Chairman stated that the purpose of the review was not to dispense with the Forums but to improve the way they worked. He also expressed the view that the Forums needed to engage more directly and effectively with local groups, village associations and the local community. Having regard to public attendance levels, the Panel concurred with the point that this was largely dependent on the subject matter discussed at the meetings. Additionally, comment was made that the public generally preferred face to face engagement with public service providers.

Whilst the Panel were supportive of the suggestion that decision making responsibilities should be devolved to the Neighbourhood Forums, Councillor Mrs D C Reynolds suggested that Members should take into account the budgetary implications that this would have at a time when the Council was trying to achieve efficiencies and generate savings. Members noted the views expressed by some respondents that the Forums might usurp the roles of the Parishes.

In referring to the devolution of decision making responsibilities to the Neighbourhood Forums, the Chairman was of the view that this resonated with Members' desire for decisions to be taken at a localised level. He also reported that the Deputy Executive Leader supported the idea of utilising the Forums as a consultation mechanism for the management of area budgets associated with the Community Infrastructure Levy. He then drew attention to the role of the Area Joint Committees, which might be performed by the Forums.

Owing to the extent of the detailed work required to pursue their investigations, the Panel decided to establish a Working Group. It was, therefore

RESOLVED

that Councillors S J Criswell, J J Dutton, S M Van De Kerkhove and R J West, together with Mr R Coxhead, be appointed onto a Working Group to undertake a review of the Neighbourhood Forums in Huntingdonshire.

61. CAMBRIDGESHIRE ADULTS WELL-BEING AND HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Panel received and noted the Minutes of the meeting of the Cambridgeshire Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 15th September 2011 (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). Members were advised that the Home Care Services Working Group had commenced their investigations and that a further update in this respect would be provided at the Panel's December 2011 meeting.

62. WORK PLAN STUDIES

The Panel received and noted a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) containing details of studies that were being undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels for Economic Well-Being and for Environmental Well-Being.

63. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SOCIAL WELL-BEING) - PROGRESS

The Panel received and noted a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which contained details of actions taken in response to recent discussions and decisions. The Scrutiny and Review Manager reported that he was awaiting a response from Circle in respect of the financial provision they had made for the Public Finance Initiative (PFI) relating to the construction of the treatment centre at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital. Additionally, the Scrutiny and Review Manager undertook to make contact with Councillor I C Bates to confirm arrangements for the scrutiny of the Council's budgets relating to the functions that fell within the remit of the Panel.

64. SCRUTINY

The 118th Edition of the Decision Digest was received and noted.

Chairman