

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING) held in the Civic Suite 1a, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, Cambs PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 12 July 2011.

PRESENT: Councillor D Harty – Vice Chairman in the Chair.

Councillors M G Baker, I J Curtis, J W Davies, P Godley, D Harty, C R Hyams, and J S Watt.

Co-opted Member Mr M Phillips.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs M Banerjee, P M D Godfrey, G J Harlock and Mr D Hopkins.

13. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 14th June 2011 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

14. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor D Harty declared a personal interest in Minute No. 17 arising from his membership of Cambridgeshire County Council.

Councillors C R Hyams and P Godley declared personal interests in Minute No. 18 by virtue of their membership of Huntingdon Town Council and Godmanchester Town Council respectively.

15. 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 July to 31st October 2011. Having been advised of the content of an item on nuisance vehicles the Panel requested sight of the report prior to its submission to Cabinet.

16. UPDATE ON SURFACE WATER FLOODING ISSUES

The Panel was informed that Mr R Kelly, Anglian Water Collections Manager, who had been invited to the meeting to provide an update on the Broadleas Pumping Station in St Ives, was not able to be present. Councillor J W Davies reminded the Panel of the background to the subject. He informed Members that several years earlier, following the receipt of a petition from residents, the Panel had established a working group to look into surface water flooding in the St Audrey Lane area of St Ives. The working group had addressed residents' concerns that the pumping station did not have sufficient

capacity to deal with both existing surface water flooding and the expected increase in the volume of water that would be experienced during flooding following the development the St Ives West area. Members were advised that a recent major breakdown at the pumping station and a burst sewer, which had taken three weeks to repair had exacerbated the problem. Mr Kelly had been due to provide the Panel with an update on the planned upgrade to the pumping station. Members requested that a statement be sought on progress for circulation to the Panel.

17. CAMBRIDGESHIRE FUTURE TRANSPORT "TRANSPORT FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE"

The Panel considered a report by the Head of Planning Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on a future transport initiative for Cambridgeshire. Members were informed of the need for alternative ways of meeting countywide transport requirements following the announcement by the County Council that by April 2015, it would cease to fund public transport. A broad agreement had been reached amongst those partners involved in the delivery of passenger transport to work collaboratively to achieve wide community benefits through a more efficient, effective and co-ordinated approach to transportation. It would involve working across organisational boundaries to co-ordinate resources, priorities, people, journeys and transport operators. This work would be overseen by a Member led governance group, which comprised the County and District Councils, NHS Cambridgeshire and Cambridgeshire Acre. Consultants had been appointed to advise on the process.

The Panel was advised that under the new arrangements, from 2012/13 onwards, the Council's budget of £83.5k would be aligned with that of other partners. Members stressed that although they supported moves to create a more efficient and cost effective service, they would not want to jeopardise the highly regarded community transport services that the budget currently supported. They, therefore, endorsed a proposal to amend paragraph 5.2 of the report and part a. of the recommendation requiring the Council's involvement and the eventual outcomes to align with the priorities contained in the Council Plan. In so doing, Members emphasized the importance of safeguarding the Council's interests in community transport, which often provided a lifeline to rural communities. The Panel also agreed with the principle of aligning the District Council's rural transport budget with other Cambridgeshire partners within the Future Transport Initiative but Members did not want Council funds to be committed without protection being afforded to existing services. Their view was that this funding should not be committed without there being certainty that they would add value and robustness to the service. It was therefore

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be invited to consider the Panel's comments as part of its deliberations on the report by the Head of Planning Services.

18. CCTV PROVISION

With the aid of a report by the Head of Operations (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel received an update on funding of the CCTV service. Having been informed of the options that were available to the Council and the high costs involved in temporarily closing the service, Members were advised that a number of changes had already taken place, which had achieved savings of £129k.

It was reported that, in view of their considerable usage of the CCTV service, the police had been asked to make a contribution to its cost. However, the police had indicated that they would be unable to comply with this request. Town and parish councils had also been approached and, although discussions were taking place with some neighbouring authorities, a viable model had not yet been found to operate a joint service.

In discussing the available options Members highlighted the benefits of the CCTV service particularly to the police given the changes that were occurring to their officer numbers. Councillor J W Davies, who was in receipt of a petition signed by St Ives residents requesting that an additional camera was installed in St Ives, reported that St Ives Town Council would shortly be discussing the District Council's approach. The petition would be placed on the agenda for the next meeting of the Panel for formal receipt. Councillor Davies also endorsed the views of the Chairman of the St Ives Town Centre Initiative who had expressed support for the retention of the current level of service.

Councillor C R Hyams expressed the view that it would have been useful to have been able to discuss this matter with an Executive Councillor. He then reiterated the value of the CCTV service to the police as a crime prevention tool. This had been confirmed to him by local police community support officers. Councillor Hyams stated that it was unreasonable to expect the District and Town Councils to pay for the service given extent of the use made of it by the police.

Co-opted Member Mr M Hopkins highlighted the reliance of the courts on CCTV footage during prosecutions and the possible impact on the outcome of trials if the service were to be reduced or withdrawn. He further commented that every possible option should be examined in order to avoid the closure of the service.

The Chairman informed the Panel that he had received an email from Councillor P G Mitchell in support of the current CCTV service. In response to a question by Mr R Coxhead, a Co-opted Member of the Social Well-being Panel, the Head of Operations stated that appointments to discuss the issue with town councils were being prioritised according to the number of cameras that were located in their areas. Members would be informed of the outcome of the negotiations later in the year.

19. MONITORING OF SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS (PLANNING OBLIGATIONS)

The Panel gave consideration to a report by the Head of People,

Performance and Partnerships (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which provided an update on the receipt and expenditure by the Council of money negotiated under Section 106 Agreements. Following questions, Members were advised that there was little chance of agreements expiring before their specified completion dates and that it was no longer the practice to include completion dates in agreements. The Panel expressed their gratitude to the Council's Service Development Officer for the provision of the data in a new easy-to-read format and endorsed a request by Councillor Harty that the County Council should adopt a similar reporting style.

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report be noted.

20. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

The Panel reviewed the draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2010/11 (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). In response to a suggestion it was reported that plans were in hand to introduce induction training for Co-opted Members. The training would incorporate a basic introduction to scrutiny and questioning skills.

With regard to the section of the report that referred to the Panel's request for the Cabinet to develop a package of assistance to enable town and parish councils to provide public conveniences, Members requested that the results of this intervention be reported to a future meeting.

21. WORKPLAN STUDIES

The Panel considered and noted a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic 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.

The Panel was reminded that a meeting of the Tree Strategy Working Group had been arranged for 27th July. With regard to the previous suggestion that a study might be undertaken into land use for agricultural purposes in the context of planning policies and its contribution to the local economy, it was agreed that a scoping report would be presented to a future meeting in order that the Panel could determine whether there would be any value in pursuing the study. Following Councillor M G Baker's request that a study was undertaken into the Council's waste collection and recycling policies, Members were informed that a report on this subject by the Head of Operations would be submitted to a future meeting.

22. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL PROGRESS

With the aid of a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel was advised of progress of matters, which had been previously discussed. With regard to the monitoring of Section 106 contributions, the Panel was advised of the steps that had been taken in conjunction

with Cambridgeshire County Council to improve audit trail documentation relating to agreements. The Panel then requested sight of the Market Town Strategy when it became available.

23. SCRUTINY

In receiving and noting the 114th edition of the Decision Digest, Members requested that they be informed in advance of the names of employees that would be retiring from the Council. Following a question by Councillor M G Baker, Members were also apprised of progress of the redevelopment of One Leisure St Ives and the joint working group study on One Leisure finance.

Chairman