

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING) held in Civic Suite 1a, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, Cambs PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 14 June 2011.

PRESENT: Councillor P M D Godfrey – Chairman.

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

Co-opted Members – Messrs D Hopkins and M Philips.

4. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Panel held on 12th April and 18th May 2011 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

6. 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 June to 30th September 2011. Members requested sight of items entitled Great Fen Supplementary Planning Document, Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy, Residential Travel Plan and St Ives West Urban Design Framework prior to their consideration by the Cabinet.

7. TRAVELLER SITES

(Councillor N J Guyatt, Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing and Councillor R B Howe, Ward Member for Upwood and The Raveleys, were in attendance for consideration of this item).

With the aid of a report by the Head of Planning Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel gave consideration to a draft response to the Government's consultation on "Planning for Traveller Sites". The Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing reported that comments which had been raised at a recent Member Seminar had been incorporated within the draft response.

In response to a question by a Member on the means by which the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment would be undertaken, the Head of Planning Services reported on the challenge faced by the Council as the Planning Authority to define and assess local needs in this respect. Members were informed that the County

Council would carry out the Assessment and that the methodology employed to undertake this work would be discussed with the County Council's Research Officer. They accepted a suggestion that they should discuss the methodology with the Officer who would be responsible to conducting the Assessment.

The Panel's attention was drawn to two recent decisions by the Planning Inspectorate, which overturned the Council's refusal of planning applications for permanent and temporary traveller pitches in the District. Members concurred with the view that this was reflective of the future requirement to make provision for such sites at a local level.

Councillor R B Howe, Ward Member for Upwood and The Raveleys, addressed the Panel on the predicted growth in traveller numbers identified within the Regional Spatial Strategy and expressed the view that the timeframe for the prediction of 15 years was inappropriate given that by their nature, travellers were a transient community. The number of travellers within the District would not be as significant as anticipated. Councillor Howe also commented that a more appropriate model for traveller sites was required and that it should take into account its effect on adjacent communities.

Arising from discussions on each of the questions raised in the consultation, the Panel commented on the need for travellers to have access to the necessary infrastructure and for the issue of separation between the traveller and local communities to be addressed when identifying future site provision. The Head of Planning Services reported that the Council generally planned to encourage the establishment of smaller sites for travellers. Past experience revealed that smaller sites were preferred by both travellers and local communities. Members welcomed this approach.

The Panel discussed whether the same tests of sustainability should be applied to traveller sites and other housing sites. Whilst Members recognised that there was public interest in having consistency in this respect, the view was expressed that the two communities would regard sustainability differently. Having expressed their satisfaction with the content of the Council's response, which was required by the 6th July 2011, the Panel

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be recommended to endorse the content of the Council's formal response to the consultation on the draft Planning Policy Statement "Planning for Traveller Sites" as appended to the report now submitted.

8. PRELIMINARY DRAFT COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY CHARGING SCHEDULE

(Councillor N J Guyatt, Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing, was in attendance for consideration of this item).

The Panel gave consideration to a report by the Head of Planning Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) proposing a Preliminary Draft Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging

Schedule for consultation.

Having been informed that under the CIL the Council would be responsible for collecting contributions from developers, the Panel noted that the new scheme would give the Council the power to influence how the levy was spent. In order to introduce the CIL the Council was required to establish an appropriate policy outlining the charges to be imposed, the process to be employed when determining the allocation of funding and the monitoring and accountability mechanisms that would be in place to ensure there was sound governance.

In response to a question on the level of resources that would be required to administer the scheme, the Head of Planning Services informed the Panel that service level agreements would be established with the beneficiaries of levy funds. Members commented on the need to include a requirement that clear and transparent detailed information was produced on the delivery of projects within the terms of the agreements. In noting that the Planning Authority would be required to produce an annual report on the CIL for submission to the Government, Members requested sight of this report as a matter of course at a future Panel meeting.

The Panel discussed a number of matters relating to the Draft Charging Schedule. It was noted that the administrative costs that could be charged to the CIL were legally limited to 5% of the income from it. It also was reported that the CIL Charging Schedule would be updated regularly to take into account changes to local circumstances. The Panel discussed the process through which other public sector bodies would negotiate the amount they received through the CIL and noted that Members would be involved in determining the funding of local infrastructure projects. It was suggested that a "plain English" version of the document was made available on the Council's website.

Having expressed their satisfaction with the content of the document and following requests for an opportunity to review the comments received through the consultation before the Charging Schedule was adopted, the Panel

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be recommended to approve the Preliminary Draft Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule for the purposes of consultation.

9. 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) containing details of the Council's performance against its priority objectives in the quarter to 31st March 2011. Members endorsed for submission to the Cabinet the comments of the Corporate Plan Working Group, particularly with regard to the objectives where targets had not been achieved. Having endorsed a suggestion by the Corporate Plan Working Group that Overview and Scrutiny should continue to monitor the Council's performance following the adoption

of the new Council Plan in April 2011, it was

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be invited to consider the Panel's comments as part of its deliberations on the report by the Head of People, Performance and Partnerships.

10. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANELS - SCHEME OF CO-OPTION

The Panel gave consideration to a number of suggested changes to the Scheme of Co-option for Overview and Scrutiny Panels. Having noted that the changes had been proposed by the Co-opted Members and reviewed at a recent meeting of the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Panels, it was

RESOLVED

that the revised Scheme of Co-option for Overview and Scrutiny Panels now submitted be adopted.

11. REMIT AND WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to 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 providing an opportunity for Members to plan their work programme for the year.

Having noted the membership of the Tree Strategy Working Group, a suggestion by a Member was endorsed that the Working Group should be invited to investigate the reciprocal impact of tree roots and public footpaths on one another. At the request of a Member of the Working Group, it was agreed that a meeting would be arranged to take place in mid-July 2011.

In discussing its work programme for the year, the Panel decided to include the Council's waste collection and recycling policies and the management and maintenance of water courses in the District as potential areas for investigation.

With regard to the progress of their existing studies, Members received brief updates on Heavy Commercial Vehicle parking in the District and flooding at St Audrey Lane, St Ives. The Chairman then drew their attention to concerns which he would be raising with the Managing Director for Communities, Partnerships and Projects in respect of the Great Fen. In light of changes made to the Panel's remit, which had been prompted by the establishment of new Cabinet Portfolios, Members noted that they would now be responsible for monitoring Section 106 Agreements relating to leisure facilities and for ongoing studies into CCTV provision and the provision of play facilities for young people.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the contents of the report be noted;
- (b) that progress in relation to ongoing studies be noted;

- (c) that the Tree Strategy Working Group be requested to investigate the reciprocal impact of tree roots and public footpaths on one another; and
- (d) that the Council's waste collection and recycling policies and the management and maintenance of water courses in the District be included within the Panel's work programme for the year.

12. SCRUTINY

The 114th Edition of the Decision Digest was received and noted.

Chairman