

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, 10 April 2012.

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

Councillors Mrs M Banerjee, I J Curtis, J W Davies, G J Harlock, D Harty and J S Watt.

Co-opted Members Mr D Hopkins and Mr M Phillips.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors M G Baker and P Godley.

90. COUNCILLOR P M D GODFREY

The Panel stood in silence as a mark of respect following the recent death of the Chairman, Councillor P M D Godfrey.

91. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 13th March 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

92. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

93. 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 April to 31st July 2012.

94. SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL SCOPING REPORT

The Panel considered a report by the Head of Planning Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the outcome of consultation on the draft Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report. Having noted that Sustainability Appraisal was a legally required process, Members questioned whether consultants would be engaged for the completion of the work. In response, Members were advised that Planning Officers had undertaken dedicated training to enable the work to be carried out in-house, though some external

support would be required for audit work.

Following further questions on the Sustainability Appraisal's relationship to the CRIF and CEF, the Head of Planning Services informed Members that the latter were existing plans and that it would be necessary to ensure that all these documents were consistent with each other. In addition, there was a presumption that applications for renewable energy generator installations would be allowed.

It was reported that, once completed, the sustainability appraisal would be examined by the Council's Legal Team to ensure that it was fit for purpose and to safeguard the Council from legal challenges. The Panel was advised that all Members would shortly receive a briefing on the new National Planning Policy Framework. The briefing would include a definition of sustainability.

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be recommended to authorise the Head of Planning Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing, to finalise and approve the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report.

95. STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

With the aid of a report by the Head of Planning Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel considered the outcome of the consultation on the draft Statement of Community Involvement. Having noted that any interested party might register with the Council to be consulted on planning policies, the Panel

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be recommended to authorise the Head of Planning Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing and the Chairman of the Development Management Panel, to finalise and approve the Statement of Community Involvement.

96. WORK PLAN 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) informing them of studies being undertaken by the other Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

97. OVERVIEW & 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 on issues that had been previously discussed. Pursuant to Minute No. 70, the Panel was advised that the Managing Director (Communities, Partnerships and Projects) had suggested that a Working Group should be convened to examine the Yaxley drainage issues in detail. It was agreed to delay the appointment of the Working Group until the after the Annual Meeting of the Council when the Membership of the Panel would be

determined. In the meantime, the Council's Project and Assets Manager would continue to try to establish the ownership of the balancing pond in Yaxley.

Having requested a follow-up visit to the Great Fen, the Head of Planning Services advised Members that a visit would be arranged to coincide with the meeting of the Great Fen Community Forum in October.

With regard to the Working Group looking at land use for agricultural purposes in the context of planning policies and agriculture's contribution to the local economy, it was agreed that a visit to David Felce's Farm would go ahead on 18th April.

98. SCRUTINY

The Panel received and noted the latest Edition of the Council's Decision Digest (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) summarising the Council's decisions since the previous meeting. In so doing, the Scrutiny and Review Manager clarified the current position with regard to the marketing of Castle Hill House.

Mr Hopkins questioned the Council's reasoning for continuing to rent Speke House for use as the Call Centre. In response, the Scrutiny and Review Manager undertook to provide Mr Hopkins with details of the approved business case.

In response to a question on the future of the Neighbourhood Forums, the Scrutiny and Review Manager updated the Panel and agreed to feed the Panel's views on the need for Members to receive updates on developments to the Chairman of the Neighbourhood Forums Working Group.

Chairman