

A meeting of **HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL** will be held in the **CIVIC SUITE, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON PE29 3TN** on **WEDNESDAY, 14 NOVEMBER 2012** on the rising of the Special Meeting of the Council and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

A G E N D A

		Time Allocation
	APOLOGIES	2 minutes
	CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS	10 minutes
1.	MINUTES (Pages 1 - 14) To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 26th September 2012.	2 minutes
2.	MEMBERS' INTERESTS To receive from Members declarations as to disclosable pecuniary or other interests in relation to any Agenda item. See Notes below.	2 minutes
3.	LEADERSHIP DIRECTION AND REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE (Pages 15 - 16) The Executive Leader, Councillor J D Ablewhite to present a review of the performance of the Cabinet over the past six months. The Council also is recommended to formally adopt the Leadership Direction. (See Agenda Item No. 5 (d), Item 23). A copy of the Leadership Direction document is enclosed.	30 minutes
4.	APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBER TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMIC WELL-BEING) (Pages 17 - 18) The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being), Councillor T V Rogers to report on the outcome of a Selection Panel held to appoint a new Independent Member to the Panel. Report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services enclosed.	5 minutes
5.	REPORTS OF THE CABINET, PANELS AND COMMITTEE (a) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) (Pages 19 - 24) (b) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) (Pages 25 - 28)	20 minutes

- (c) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) (Pages 29 - 32)
- (d) Cabinet (Pages 33 - 36)
- (e) Development Management Panel (Pages 37 - 38)
- (f) Licensing Committee (Pages 39 - 40)
- (g) Corporate Governance Panel (Pages 41 - 44)

6. ORAL QUESTIONS

30 minutes

In accordance with the Council Procedure Rules (Section 8.3) of the Council's Constitution, to receive oral questions from Members of the Council.

7. COMMITTEE/PANEL MEMBERSHIP

2 minutes

The Executive Leader, Councillor J D Ablewhite to propose a variation to Committee/Panel membership.

Dated this 6 day of November 2012



Head of Paid Service

Notes

A. Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

- (1) *Members are required to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests and unless you have obtained dispensation, cannot discuss or vote on the matter at the meeting and must also leave the room whilst the matter is being debated or voted on.*
- (2) *A Member has a disclosable pecuniary interest if it*
 - (a) *relates to you, or*
 - (b) *is an interest of -*
 - (i) *your spouse or civil partner; or*
 - (ii) *a person with whom you are living as husband and wife; or*
 - (iii) *a person with whom you are living as if you were civil partners*

and you are aware that the other person has the interest.

(3) *Disclosable pecuniary interests includes -*

- (a) any employment or profession carried out for profit or gain;*
- (b) any financial benefit received by the Member in respect of expenses incurred carrying out his or her duties as a Member (except from the Council);*
- (c) any current contracts with the Council;*
- (d) any beneficial interest in land/property within the Council's area;*
- (e) any licence for a month or longer to occupy land in the Council's area;*
- (f) any tenancy where the Council is landlord and the Member (or person in (2)(b) above) has a beneficial interest; or*
- (g) a beneficial interest (above the specified level) in the shares of any body which has a place of business or land in the Council's area.*

B. Other Interests

(4) If a Member has a non-disclosable pecuniary interest or a non-pecuniary interest then you are required to declare that interest, but may remain to discuss and vote.

(5) A Member has a non-disclosable pecuniary interest or a non-pecuniary interest where -

- (a) a decision in relation to the business being considered might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial standing of you or a member of your family or a person with whom you have a close association to a greater extent than it would affect the majority of the council tax payers, rate payers or inhabitants of the ward or electoral area for which you have been elected or otherwise of the authority's administrative area, or*
- (b) it relates to or is likely to affect any of the descriptions referred to above, but in respect of a member of your family (other than specified in (2)(b) above) or a person with whom you have a close association*

and that interest is not a disclosable pecuniary interest.

Please contact Ms C Deller, Democratic Services Manager, Tel No 01480 388007/e-mail: Christine.Deller@huntingdonshire.gov.uk if you have a general query on any Agenda Item, wish to tender your apologies for absence from the meeting, or would like information on any decision taken by the Council.

Agenda and enclosures can be viewed on the District Council's website – www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk (under Councils and Democracy).

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Agenda Item 1

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the COUNCIL held in the Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 26 September 2012.

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs B E Boddington – Chairman.

Councillors J D Ablewhite, M G Baker,
K M Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, I C Bates,
P L E Bucknell, G J Bull, E R Butler,
R C Carter, S Cawley, B S Chapman,
K J Churchill, S J Criswell, I J Curtis,
J W Davies, D B Dew, P J Downes,
Mrs L A Duffy, R S Farrer, R Fuller, J A Gray,
A Hansard, G J Harlock, R Harrison, D Harty,
C R Hyams, Mrs P A Jordan, P Kadewere,
Ms L Kadic, S M Van De Kerkhove,
Mrs P J Longford, A J Mackender-Lawrence,
M C Oliver, J W G Pethard, P D Reeve,
Mrs D C Reynolds, T V Rogers,
T D Sanderson, R G Tuplin, D M Tysoe and
R J West.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors S Akthar, W T Clough, D A Giles, S Greenall, N J Guyatt, R B Howe, P G Mitchell, M F Shellens, P K Ursell and A H Williams.

26. PRAYER

The Reverend A Milton, Team Rector for the Huntingdon Ministry opened the meeting with Prayer.

27. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) District Council Members

The Executive Leader, Councillor J D Ablewhite updated the Council on the health of the Deputy Executive Leader, Councillor N J Guyatt and having been advised that he was convalescing at home after hospital treatment, the Council wished to pass on their best wishes to him for a complete recovery.

At the same time, Councillor Ablewhite welcomed the return of Councillor T V Rogers to the Council after his short absence due to ill health.

(b) Anglia in Bloom

In reporting that she had attended the annual 'Anglia in Bloom' ceremony at the Burgess Hall in St. Ives, Councillor Mrs Boddington announced that the prestigious Ron Lacey Award had been presented to Mr D Smith who was employed by Huntingdon Town Council.

The Chairman welcomed Mr Smith to the meeting and together with Councillor C R Hyams, Mayor of Huntingdon Town Council presented him with the first Chairman's Award for Services to the Community in recognition of Mr Smith's creativity in presenting flower displays at locations around Huntingdon, his long service and dedication and his contribution to the achievement by the Town of the Anglia In Bloom Gold Award for four years in succession.

(c) **Olympic Torch Relay and CCTV Award**

Having given the Council the opportunity to view footage of the 2012 Olympic Torch Relay through St. Ives and Huntingdon on 8th July 2012 in advance of the meeting, the Chairman extended the Council's congratulations to the CCTV Team on their achievement in receiving the "Andy Bruce Award" presented by the Huntingdonshire Business Against Crime Scheme in recognition of those who have performed beyond expectations for the good of the scheme.

(d) **One Leisure Award**

The Council congratulated the One Leisure Team on their success in being awarded a Bronze Medal for "Best UK Small Chain" at the 2012 Health Club Awards. The Executive Councillor for Healthy and Active Communities, Councillor T D Sanderson wished to place on record his commendation to the One Leisure Team in achieving 3rd place nationally for Huntingdonshire.

(e) **Events**

Having updated the Council on a variety of events which she had attended on their behalf, the Chairman drew particular attention to the occasion of her reception and the opportunity to unveil a new bench in Samian Court adjacent to Pathfinder House, Huntingdon in memory of former Councillor P M D Godfrey. The Chairman read to the Council a short extract from a letter from former Councillor Godfrey's wife, Mrs J Godfrey thanking her husband's colleagues on the Council for the tribute which they had made in his memory.

28. PETITION

The Council received a petition submitted on behalf of 303 signatories seeking the District Council's support for the provision of a bus route that maintained direct services south to Sawtry as well as north to Peterborough. In the absence of the lead petitioner, Mrs O Main, the Council proceeded to discuss the subject matter referred to in the petition.

Councillors K M Baker, Mrs L Kadic and D M Tysoe all contributed to the debate. These speakers acknowledged the importance of bus services in rural communities yet understood too, the difficulties faced by funding authorities and bus companies when particular routes

were not well supported and thus uneconomic to sustain. Reference was made to bus No. 46(a), a service operated by Nene and Ouse Community Transport which covered the Alconburys, Sawtry and Stilton and the importance of discussions with Cambridgeshire County Council to ensure that this service continued after April 2013.

The Executive Leader, Councillor J D Ablewhite responded formally to the petition and welcomed the issues it highlighted in respect of the importance of rural accessibility and its effect on local communities. However, he reminded the Council that it had no statutory responsibility for the provision of local bus services but that in recognition of the importance of the issue, the Council had increased its rural transport budget to £85,000 per annum. This budget had been used as effectively as possible through consultation with partners and local transport operators. Whilst the decisions affecting route 46 had been made for commercial reasons by Stagecoach, the District Council had agreed to jointly fund, with the County Council, a replacement 46(a) service using £13,000 from its own budget which would allow the route to operate to the end of March 2013. Councillor Ablewhite added that this service, run by Nene and Ouse Community Transport appeared to be well used by the communities in the Alconburys and continued to link Stilton to Glatton, Sawtry and Huntingdon. Councillor Ablewhite described to the Council the current services enjoyed by Sawtry and Stilton and expressed his view that these met a range of local needs and when compared to other communities was far better than was enjoyed elsewhere. Whilst Councillor Ablewhite would wish to see a greater range and frequency of bus services, he was pleased that the District Council was able to respond positively to the Stagecoach changes and retain accessibility for some villages and should further changes be proposed in the future, he indicated that the District Council would be willing to assist where possible and within the resources available to it.

On conclusion of his address and on behalf of Members, the Executive Leader thanked Mrs Main for drawing this issue to the Council's attention. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the content of the petition be noted and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be requested to convey to Mrs Main the outcome of the Council's discussion and decision on the petition.

29. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 4th July 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

30. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No interests were declared by the Members present.

31. COUNCIL DEBATE

The Chairman reminded Members of the decision by the Council to suspend Council Procedure Rule 11 (Rules of Debate) to enable

headline debates and “Green Paper” proposals to be discussed by Members in an open manner. The Council, therefore

RESOLVED

that Council Procedure Rule 11 (Rules of Debate) be suspended for the duration of the discussion under Minute No. 31 during which time the common law rules of debate be observed by Members and applied by the Chairman.

The Chairman invited the Executive Councillor for Customer Services, Councillor B S Chapman to open the debate on Council Tax, other welfare reform and the Council’s proposed response to changes in this area. Councillor Chapman was assisted by the Managing Director (Resources), Mr T Parker.

With the assistance of a power point presentation (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) Councillor Chapman opened the debate by describing the key elements of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the impact this would have on the District Council. It was explained that the main principles of the Act were:-

- ◆ to create incentives to work;
- ◆ to protect the most vulnerable; and
- ◆ to deliver fairness to those claiming benefits and to the tax payer.

Detailed draft Regulations also had been published to give greater clarity to key elements of the complex legislation. Members also were made aware that the Act provided for the abolition, with effect from 1st April 2013, of the National Tax Benefits Scheme and that from that date, each Council would be required to introduce, in its place, a local council tax support system. It was also pointed out that Government funding towards the local scheme would be 10% or £1.3m less than the Council previously received for Council Tax Benefit support. Notwithstanding that the District Council had developed a draft scheme for council tax support and whilst this had been published for consultation with a closing date of 14th October 2012, Councillor Chapman confirmed that support for pensioners would remain unchanged.

Councillor Chapman described the work which had been undertaken thus far to prepare for the introduction of a new scheme mentioning in particular the consultation exercise, direct notification to those householders that might be affected by the new scheme, system development and training of officers to respond to the changes. In presenting, in detail, the underlying principles of the proposed support scheme to the Council, Councillor Chapman reaffirmed that all working age households not considered to be vulnerable would be expected to contribute towards their council tax, so that the scheme would provide protection for the most vulnerable whilst continuing to support people moving into work and helping those in low paid work. A series of examples were used to illustrate how the household income of different family groups and individuals in varied circumstances would change under the provisions of the new scheme.

The Executive Councillor and the Managing Director (Resources) proceeded to respond to questions from Members and specifically in reply to Councillor Mrs D C Reynolds explained what was to be understood by the terms “current allocations” and “all those of working age should contribute”. Councillor Chapman suggested that an “applicable amount” was the weekly figure used to calculate the council tax benefit that the customer should be entitled to receive and that this would take into account their current household size and allocation. It was confirmed that most working age households would not be protected under the scheme but would be assessed under the new rules and expected to pay something towards their council tax but only if they were occupying what was considered to be a “chargeable home”. It was made clear in a response to Councillor S M Van De Kerkhove that the new scheme did not, in general, permit retrospective claims for council tax benefit. Given the pressures on funding and whilst there would be some entitlement to transitional claims, it was not considered equitable to make retrospective payments as these might penalise the level of support available to meet the claims of those who had submitted their applications on time.

Councillor P J Downes congratulated the Executive Councillor and the Head of Customer Services for drafting a scheme under such pressure in response to the Act and added that, in his view, the new legislation had two redeeming features. He was hopeful that the Act would reduce the number of unoccupied homes and match occupancy to capacity. Councillor Downes was fearful that loop holes would continue to exist and referred to circumstances where it was apparent that two people were occupying a property when records suggested that only one was in occupation. Councillor Downes further considered that the provision contained in paragraph 2.10 of the scheme in relation to the disregard of child benefit income for the eldest child was harsh as was the proposal not to include back-dating of applications given the possibility that individuals might have inadvertently missed the deadline for submission.

In noting these comments, Councillor Chapman reminded the Council that any individual found to have submitted a fraudulent claim would be prosecuted and that it was the objective of the scheme not to penalise those who had chosen to work.

Having expressed the view that Councillors should prepare themselves to respond to difficult press headlines when the scheme went ‘live’, Councillor D M Tysoe also asked whether there would be an opportunity to re-visit the scheme should that prove necessary. Councillor Chapman assured the questioner that discretionary payments were available in the event of exceptional cases.

Councillor P D Reeve was of the view that the Government would regret the decision to introduce the Welfare Reform Act in the current economic climate adding that people were not unemployed through choice. He questioned the availability of jobs for individuals to apply for and considered it essential to continue to support the poor and vulnerable in preference to migrants who might come to the UK to find work.

The Executive Councillor reminded the Council that applicants without

a local connection would not be entitled to support under the scheme and that, in his view, there were opportunities for employment in Huntingdonshire and more so than other areas. There would always be individuals unable to work for genuine and justifiable reasons.

In congratulating those who had contributed to the formulation of the scheme, Councillor R Harrison commended the provision which enabled all war pensions to be disregarded in the assessment of income for council tax support. However, he requested that the term "War Pension" be clearly defined. Councillor Chapman undertook to inform the questioner of the precise definition of a War Pension, in writing, after the meeting.

General comments having been made about the scenarios used to illustrate the effect of the scheme on different family groups, the Executive Councillor reminded Members that the council tax support scheme would be recommended for adoption at the Council meeting in December with a view to implementation from April 2013. The Head of Customer Services had invited all those expected to be affected by the changes to visit the District Council's offices for advice. Councillor Chapman also briefly referred to proposals for the future transfer of housing benefit work to the Department of Works and Pensions.

Councillor S J Criswell asked whether the Council had sufficient resources to be able to advise all claimants given the many different situations in which they might find themselves and was assured by the Executive Councillor that arrangements had been put in place to respond to the various requests for advice.

The Executive Leader, Councillor J D Ablewhite closed the debate by reminding the Council that the proposed council tax support scheme represented one of the largest projects for change undertaken by the Council and he wished to thank the Executive Councillor and the Head of Customer Services and her team for their efforts in enabling the Authority to deliver a new system in compliance with the Act. Councillor Ablewhite indicated his support for the Government's intention to reduce the cost of the welfare system and suggested that there were employment opportunities in Huntingdonshire for those wishing to work. He concluded by stating that it should not be the case that an individual was "better off" financially at home than one who was working and he endorsed the Government's attempt to address the system which existed for those who were genuinely in need of welfare assistance rather than those who chose to make it a lifestyle choice.

32. GREEN PAPER ITEM

In the absence of the Executive Councillor for Planning and Housing Strategy, Councillor N J Guyatt, Councillor D B Dew, Chairman of the Development Management Panel updated Members on the performance of the Council against the core strategy housing requirement in comparison with neighbouring authorities.

Members were reminded that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) contained advice which urged authorities to positively meet the development requirements of their area by

providing a five year supply of land for housing which also would stimulate local economic growth. Councillor Dew explained that the District Council was required under the former Regional Spatial Strategy to provide 14,000 new dwellings in the period 2001 – 2026. An above target average completion rate had resulted in a residual annual target of at least 458 dwellings per annum by 2026 if the requirement of 14,000 was to be achieved.

Councillor Dew asserted that the District Council had continued proactively to meet its housing targets for the future by considering positively housing locations which would favour sustainable development. He added that Huntingdonshire's rate of completions had increased since the economic difficulties had begun in 2008 and compared favourably with other Cambridgeshire authorities locally and nationally.

In terms of statistics, Councillor Dew concluded by informing Members that the District Council received 3,000 development management applications each year and that the fee income was on target. It was also the expectation that housing pressures would continue and appropriate environmental enhancement could be secured from developments at Alconbury Weald and close to Cambridge.

Councillor S J Criswell referred to the higher than average level of homelessness in the District and the large deficit in rental properties and questioned how the District Council could bring forward social housing more quickly. Whilst agreeing that this should be the District Council's aspiration, Councillor Dew undertook to make enquiries and respond to the questioner in writing after the meeting.

Referring to the number of dwellings completed in the year 2011/2012, Councillor I C Bates asked what percentage of these arose as a result of sites allocated through the core strategy and what percentage had emerged from windfall sites. Councillor Dew undertook to prepare a written response to this question and to circulate the reply to all Members.

Councillor P D Reeve made reference to the changing role of the developer under the new NPPF and in response, Councillor Dew stated that he was aware that the Executive Councillor for Planning and Housing Strategy had written formally to the Government on issues associated with the NPPF. Councillor Dew encouraged Members to forward any additional questions to him by email.

33. FINANCIAL FORECAST

With the assistance of a report by the Head of Financial Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) and referring to Minute No. 34, (d), Item No. 5 post, the Executive Councillor for Resources presented the interim financial forecast to the Council and updated Members on issues which could impact upon the process leading to approval of the 2013/2014 budget and Medium Term Plan at the Council meeting in February 2013. The Executive Councillor also invited the views of the Council on the basis on which the Minimum Revenue Provision should be calculated. The Council was reminded that the financial forecast was the first stage in the process

towards approval of the 2013/2014 budget.

Councillor Gray reminded Members that the financial objectives of the Cabinet were –

- ◆ to achieve a balanced revenue budget by the financial year 2016/2017;
- ◆ to maintain an appropriate level of revenue reserves;
- ◆ to establish a clear protocol for borrowing and investment; and
- ◆ to plan for the withdrawal of the new homes bonus should this occur.

Having updated the Council on the progress of the Cabinet towards each objective, Councillor Gray drew Members' attention to the content of the report of the Head of Financial Services and mentioned in particular the impact on the 2011/2012 outturn of work projects being delivered by Officers under or within budget. Councillor Gray wished to place on record his gratitude to staff for their efforts in this respect.

The Council was reminded that provision had been made in the budget for a 3.5% increase in pay although a decision had not yet been made on the precise pay award for 2013. The Executive Councillor drew attention to risks or uncertainties which might impact on the Council's budget. These included the possibility that the forecast for delivery of new homes might not materialise thereby affecting the level of the new homes bonus which could be allocated by the Government. He added that the Cabinet had recognised this uncertainty and requested Officers to monitor development more closely so that the position could be updated on a quarterly basis. Other areas of risk included the scheme for the localisation of business rates and council tax support which might require the Council to meet a reduction in funding from the Government. Lastly, the Council was acquainted with potential for the District Council to contribute towards the liability created by the demise of Municipal Mutual Insurance, a company in which the District Council and its predecessor authorities formerly held policies.

The Council was reminded that the Cabinet continued to consider ways to deliver further efficiencies either by service reorganisation or by generating income. Details of these schemes would be shared with the Overview and Scrutiny Panels and the Council when appropriate.

Councillor Gray concluded by commending to the Council the annuity basis as the means of calculating the Minimum Revenue Provision and before inviting the Council to debate the financial forecast alerted the Council to the prospect of further difficult decisions which may lay ahead.

In response to a question from Councillor P L E Bucknell in respect of issues identified as possibly impacting on the Council's budget, the Executive Councillor anticipated that new legislation could reduce the income recovered from planning application fees given the suggestion that no formal planning permission would be required for home extensions. Similarly, the continuing uncertainties in the housing

market also could impact on fee income. However, the Executive Councillor was able to confirm that the sale of Castle Hill House was progressing but that there were no plans currently to develop the vacant site adjacent to Pathfinder House.

On behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor P J Downes thanked Councillor Gray for his presentation and indicated that his colleagues would continue to robustly contribute to and challenge the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) in their consideration of the Council's financial plans.

Having been moved by Councillor Gray and duly seconded, the Council

RESOLVED

that the content of the report be noted and the annuity basis for the calculation of the Minimum Revenue Provision as described in Annex B of the report now submitted approved.

34. REPORTS OF THE CABINET, PANELS AND COMMITTEES

(a) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being)

Councillor T V Rogers presented the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) held on 12th July and 6th September 2012.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) held on 12th July and 6th September 2012 be received and adopted.

(b) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being)

Councillor D Harty presented the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) held on 10th July and 11th September 2012.

.....

In connection with Item No. 7 and in response to questions from Councillor P J Downes and P D Reeve regarding the pilot initiative for the placing of stickers on kerb side wheeled bins, Councillor D M Tysoe, Executive Councillor for the Environment reminded the Council that the pilot scheme was still in progress and that he was awaiting a response from Speed Watch on the success or otherwise of the Initiative. Councillor Harty undertook to respond to Councillor Downes in writing and comment as to whether a driver could be

expected to react to a notice of a speed restriction if it was placed on a kerb side wheeled bin.

.....
In connection with Item No. 13 and in response to a question from Councillor R J West, Councillor Harty concurred with the questioner's view that the original 'call for action' on concerns over the design of the Loves Farm Development in St. Neots was successful as it had resulted in recommendations which would inform a future housing scheme and encourage improved engagement with the County Council on adoption of roads of adequate standard.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) held on 10th July and 11th September 2012 be received and adopted.

(c) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being)

Councillor S J Criswell presented the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) held on 3rd July and 4th September 2012.

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In connection with Item No. 11 and in response to a question from Councillor P D Reeve regarding the proposed model for new local joint committees in Huntingdonshire which appeared to restrict dual-hatted Members to one vote, Councillor Criswell remarked that the arrangements had emerged from consultation responses and whilst acknowledging that there was no perfect solution to the way in which voting could be organised at meetings he was hopeful that in the future some compromise might be achieved.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) held on 3rd July and 4th September 2012 be received and adopted.

(d) Cabinet

Councillor J D Ablewhite, Executive Leader and Chairman of the Cabinet presented the Report of the meetings of the

Cabinet held on 19th July and 30th September 2012.

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In connection with Item No. 5, it was noted that the Financial Forecast had previously been considered by the Council under Minute No. 33.

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In connection with Item No. 12 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes which raised concern that the placing of a purple sticker on kerb side wheeled bins also identified the homes of vulnerable people to individuals of dubious intent, Councillor Ablewhite suggested that whilst there did not appear to be any evidence of abuse any concerns might be overcome in the future by using a simple IT software package to identify the homes of vulnerable residents.

.....
Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 19th July and 13th September 2012 be received and adopted.

(e) Standards Committee

Councillor A Hansard presented the Report of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 6th September 2012.

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In connection with Item No. 7, Councillor Hansard reported on the outcome of interviews for the posts of Lead and Deputy Independent Persons which had taken place after the Agenda for the meeting had been despatched. Having described the new role of the Independent Person and advised of the number of candidates considered during the interview process, Councillor Hansard moved and it was duly seconded and

RESOLVED

that, on the recommendation of the Standards Interviewing Panel, Messrs M Lynch and D L Hall be appointed to serve as Lead and Deputy Independent Persons for the period ending 30th June 2013.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 6th September 2012 be received and adopted.

(f) Development Management Panel

Councillor D B Dew presented the Report of the meetings of the Development Management Panel held on 16th July, 20th August and 17th September 2012.

.....
In connection with Item No. 6 and in response to a question from Councillor C R Hyams, Councillor Dew updated the Council on the current status of the draft Urban Design Framework for Bearscroft Farm, Godmanchester. As the document had progressed through both the Overview and Scrutiny (Environmental Well-Being) and Development Management Panels it carried some weight in the planning process but Cambridgeshire County Council had objected to elements of the framework which currently prevented it from progressing any further. As negotiations in this respect were still ongoing, Councillor Dew was unable to comment further.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Development Management Panel held on 16th July, 20th August and 17th September 2012 be received and adopted.

(g) Employment Panel

Councillor S Cawley presented the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 19th September 2012.

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In connection with Item No. 8 and in response to a question from Councillor S M Van De Kerkhove, Councillor Cawley assured the questioner that it was the intention to put in place robust measures to manage absence from work due to sickness.

.....
In connection with Item No. 11 and in light of the suggestion, under the Employee Opinion Survey, that only 75% of employees felt that they were treated with dignity and respect at work by District Councillors, Councillor P J Downes reported that he hoped to discuss with the Executive Leader and Councillor P D Reeve, the possibility

of a protocol which would enable employees to raise concerns about Members in an appropriate way.

.....
In connection with Item No. 12, Councillor Cawley invited the Council to endorse the sentiments of the Panel with regard to the six employees who had retired from the local government service.

.....
Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 19th September 2012 be received and adopted.

35. ORAL QUESTIONS

In accordance with the Council Procedure Rules (paragraph 8.3 of the Rules), the Chairman proceeded to conduct a period of oral questions addressed to Executive Councillors and Panel Chairmen as follows:-

Question from Councillor C R Hyams to the Executive Leader, Councillor J D Ablewhite

In response to a question regarding the prospect of finding a long-term solution to the current difficulties experienced by Huntingdonshire Citizens' Advice Bureau, Councillor Ablewhite empathised with the questioner adding that he too had been shocked by the closure of the CAB especially at a time when their service and advice was most needed. He added that discussions had continued with a view to finding a remedy which would retain the volunteers and their experience in the period to April 2013 before a long-term solution and a new service either through the CAB or another provider could commence in the Spring. In this respect, Councillor Ablewhite advised Members that he had offered assistance by suggesting that accommodation might be made available for a new service in the Council's offices. Councillor Ablewhite also indicated his wish to place on record his gratitude to Huntingdonshire CAB for their service to District residents over many years.

Question from Councillor P J Downes to the Executive Leader, Councillor J D Ablewhite

In response to a question regarding the reasons for the closure of the Huntingdonshire Citizens' Advice Bureau and given his understanding that these related to the under-funding of the local government pension scheme, Councillor Ablewhite assured the questioner that this would not affect the District or County Council's involvement in the LGPS and was due to management decisions taken by the CAB in recent years.

Question from Councillor R G Tuplin to the Executive Leader,

Councillor J D Ablewhite

In response to a question regarding the procedure for CIL or Section 106 funding towards secondary or academy schools in Huntingdonshire, Councillor Ablewhite assured the questioner that governance arrangements would be put in place such that local education establishments would have the opportunity to benefit from CIL or Section 106 monies.

Question from Councillor Mrs P J Longford to the Executive Leader, Councillor J D Ablewhite

In response to a question regarding the current position in respect of civil parking enforcement, Councillor Ablewhite concurred with the questioner that the issue required to be addressed but that responsibility for implementation lay with the County Council. He understood that this would commence with a pilot scheme in a selected area.

Question from Councillor C R Hyams to the Executive Councillor for Healthy and Active Communities, Councillor T D Sanderson

In response to information presented to the Council from the questioner regarding the successful outcome of prosecutions undertaken by Environmental Protection Officers which had resulted in fines totalling £3,015, Councillor Sanderson undertook to congratulate the Environmental Protection Team, on the Council's behalf, for their efforts in bringing these offences to court and for protecting residents on food hygiene and health and safety issues.

Before the meeting closed, Members were invited to attend a meeting of the Cabinet of Cambridgeshire County Council which was to take place at 10.00am in the Priory Centre, St. Neots on 2nd October 2012. The meeting would be followed by public question time.

The meeting ended at 9.55pm.

Chairman



LEADERSHIP DIRECTION

This strategic document sets out the Council's Themes and Aims and provides a basis for us to plan our work. It does not cover everything that we do or all the services that we provide, but seeks to focus on those issues that matter most to people, national priorities set by the Government and local challenges arising from the social, economic and environmental context of the district.

Our Vision

Huntingdonshire District Council will continue to improve the quality of life in Huntingdonshire by working with our communities and partners to achieve sustainable economic growth whilst providing excellent value for money services that meet local needs within a balanced budget.

Our Themes

Strong local economy	Enable sustainable growth	Improve the quality of life in Huntingdonshire	Working with our communities
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Theme	Strong local economy
Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful delivery of the Alconbury Enterprise zone • Support partners to improve strategic infrastructure, including broadband • Support the development of town centres and key settlements to become economically viable and vibrant • Support enterprise • Encourage the provision of a wide range of jobs appropriate for existing and future residents • Support the skills levels that aid economic prosperity.

Theme	Enable sustainable growth
Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable an adequate supply and mix of new housing to meet future needs • Promote development opportunities in and around the market towns • Protect and improve our environment • Maximise benefits to the community from new developments • Enable the provision of affordable housing • Enable and encourage Community energy projects.

Theme	Improve the quality of life in Huntingdonshire
Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the Council’s role in reducing benefit dependency • Support opportunities for the vulnerable to live independently • Achieve a low level of homelessness • Process Housing and Council Tax benefit claims in a timely and efficient way • Make our services accessible to all • Ensure benefits reform is implemented as smoothly and as effectively as possible • Work with partners to minimise the fear of crime • Protect the health of individuals and reduce health inequalities • Build the ‘One leisure’ business.

Theme	Working with our Communities
Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build constructive relationships with other public sector organisations, parishes & towns, business community and ‘not for profit’ sector • Enhance civic pride & community involvement through “Huntingdonshire Matters” & “Shape Your Place” (Localism) • Adopt multi agency problem solving approaches • To undertake meaningful consultation, being open, transparent and accessible.

Theme	The Council (for internal use only)
Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balancing our budget, manage our reserves and borrowing effectively • Maximise business and income generation opportunities • A new or revised pay scheme that both properly rewards and motivates staff and is affordable • To generate & properly manage Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) receipts.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve communications with Staff and Members • Improve communications with Residents and stakeholders.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a leadership culture across all tiers of management within HDC • Skill development – supporting the development of the workforce to meet HDC priorities.

Appointment of Independent Member Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being)

Report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Following the review of its democratic structure, the Council decided to introduce provision for two independent members of the public to be appointed to each of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels. A recruitment process was undertaken and the Council, in February 2010, agreed to appoint six individuals to these roles.

1.2 It is the belief that the appointment of Co-opted Members to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels contributes to the promotion of local democracy by -

- ◆ enabling those who have an interest in serving the community to become involved in local democracy;
- ◆ providing expertise and knowledge on specialist subjects;
- ◆ enabling people from all parts of the community to become engaged in the local political process; and
- ◆ introducing local perspectives that are not subject to political influences.

2. NEW APPOINTMENT TO ECONOMIC WELL-BEING PANEL

2.1 Following the resignation of a Co-opted Member from the Economic Well-Being Panel, the Council has advertised the vacant position in the local media and on the Council's website. The current co-optees were also asked if they wished to apply for the vacancy.

2.2 A Selection Panel comprising Councillors G J Bull, S Greenall and A H Williams was appointed by the Panel to interview applicants for the post and to recommend to the Panel the candidate they considered should be appointed. The Selection Panel is scheduled to meet on 7th November 2012 and their recommendation will be considered by the Economic Well-Being Scrutiny Panel at its meeting the following evening.

2.3 To be eligible for co-option, a person must meet the qualifications for election as a Member of a local authority in terms of age, residency or employment and nationality. Co-opted Members are expected to comply with the Council Procedure Rules that apply to meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels as set out in the Council's

Constitution. They are also required to complete a declaration of disclosable pecuniary interests.

- 2.4 Co-opted Members are entitled to claim travel and subsistence under the Council's Members Allowance Scheme.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 In accordance with the Council's Scheme, a co-option to an Overview and Scrutiny Panel should be made by the Council on the recommendation of the Panel to which the person is to be co-opted.

- 3.2 As interviews for the post of Co-opted Member are to be held after the Agenda for the Council has been despatched, the outcome will be reported at the meeting. It is, therefore

RECOMMENDED

that the Council appoints the candidate proposed by the Selection Panel to serve on the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) for a four year term of office.

Contact Officer: C Bulman, Democratic Services Officer
☎ 01480 388234

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Independent Overview and Scrutiny Panel Members file held in Legal and Democratic Services

Huntingdonshire District Council Scheme of Co-Option.

Huntingdonshire District Council Guidance for Independent Members of Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being)

Report of the meeting held on 4th October 2012

Matters for Information

**19. HOUSING BENEFIT –
INTRODUCTION OF RISK BASED VERIFICATION**

(The following item was considered as a confidential item under paragraph 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.)

Following a successful pilot scheme, the Panel has considered a proposal to introduce Risk Based Verification for new Housing and Council Tax Benefit claims that are submitted using the online claim facility. The aim is to reduce fraud and error by concentrating resources on the type of claim where the risk of the claimant providing incorrect information or evidence has been deemed to be high.

Members have received an explanation of the way in which the Risk Based Verification process will operate. It is expected that as a consequence of its implementation there will be a reduction in fraud against the Council. In considering the implications of introducing the new system, the Panel has discussed the cost benefits of the proposal. A Business Case has been prepared for this purpose, which shows that the system is not expensive (c£10K) and will produce a net saving in terms of Officer time spent on the processing of claims. The Panel has suggested that the Cabinet should be provided with a copy of the Business Case to give Members a better indication of the financial implications of the change when taking a decision on this matter.

During further discussion, Members have been advised that Risk Based Verification will also be introduced for claimants who advise the Council of changes in their circumstances in due course. It is further intended to implement Risk Based Verification for Council Tax Support once the Local Government Finance Act has received Royal Assent. A further report will be submitted to the Cabinet at this time.

At the conclusion of their deliberations, the Panel has recommended that the Cabinet should adopt the proposed Benefits Risk Based Verification Policy. Item No. 32 of their Report refers.

20. THE CORPORATE OFFICE

The Panel has received a presentation by the Corporate Team Manager on the role and functions of the Council's Corporate Office and the work which is being undertaken by the Team to support people back into employment within the District.

The Corporate Office undertakes a number of core functions and also provides the lead on, or offers support for a number of Council projects. The Panel has been provided with details of various projects. Members have raised a number of questions about the staffing of the team and their overall workload. It has been established that the team reports directly to the Managing Directors and that work balance fluctuates depending on the number and nature of the projects that are 'live' at any one time.

In terms of the work which is being supported by the Corporate Team to help the unemployed back into work, Members' attention has been drawn to the establishment of the Huntingdon and St Neots Work Clubs, the work which is undertaken with voluntary organisations, the Business Support programme and the Council's involvement in the Cambridgeshire Redundancy Network. Members have welcomed these types of initiatives as a clear example of the successes which can be achieved from partnership working.

In considering the functions of the Team, Members have discussed two aspects of its work on communications function; namely internal and external communications. Having noted that one of the priorities for the Corporate Office is to improve internal communications following the significant organisational change which has recently happened, Members have highlighted the relationship between the availability of information and the impact on employee welfare and morale. There is a need to match the corporate information provided to that which is required. The Corporate Team Manager has expressed the view that there is a need for a cultural shift in communications across the organisation and, as a result, the Panel has asked her to attend a future meeting to discuss the communications matters in detail.

21. COMMUNITY RIGHT TO CHALLENGE

The Panel has considered the Council's proposed arrangements for the operation of the new Community Right to Challenge. The Right to Challenge has been created by the Localism Act and introduces a right for defined organisations and persons to submit an Expression of Interest in taking over the provision of a service on behalf of the Council.

In considering the proposed process and having noted that other Local Authorities have not been receiving a significant number of Expressions of Interest, Members have asked a number of questions about the grounds on which the Council may reject an Expression of Interest and the terms on which any interest would be considered vexatious or trivial. The wording within the Council's procedure reflects that of the Statutory Instrument and there has been no Government Guidance published to-date. It will be a matter for the Council to interpret at the appropriate time. In the case of an internal application being submitted in competition with an Expression of Interest from elsewhere, it will be judged independently against the criteria which have been defined as part of the procurement process.

The procurement process has the potential to be time consuming and costly for the Council. In view of the additional costs which might be incurred, Members have questioned whether any funding has been included within the Medium Term Plan for dealing with the Right to Challenge. Having noted that currently no such provision has been made and that the need for additional resource will only become apparent in light of experience, Members have commented that this is a further example of Central Government passing down responsibilities to local government without providing the necessary funding.

Subject to the clarification of the matters that are to be delegated to the Managing Directors and the process leading to a decision, the Panel has endorsed the Council's proposed arrangements for the operation of the Community Right to Challenge.

22. PROPOSED CIL GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES

The Panel has been acquainted with the progress being made with the implementation of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for Huntingdonshire and details of a proposed governance structure for CIL receipts and related spending. The Government has still to provide guidance on the distribution of CIL funding and, in view of the limited expenditure which is expected in the forthcoming year, the Cabinet has agreed that any monies received during 2012/13 will be banked.

With specific reference to the re-development of RAF Brampton, Members have commented on the need for the Government to identify a figure for the 'meaningful amount' of CIL receipts which will be allocated to the area in which a development lies. This has been the subject of a Government consultation and it is estimated that there will be a dedicated pot in the region of 5% to be spent on infrastructure to support growth. This is in addition to any monies from CIL or Section 106 funding for a particular development. They have also discussed what funding provision there might be for adjacent areas which are affected by a particular development. With

exception of the 'meaningful amount', CIL in general can be spent anywhere and, therefore, it is important to develop a business plan to look at the needs of the District.

In terms of the proposed governance arrangements for the distribution of funding, Members have commented on the need to provide an opportunity for Parish Council's to exert some influence on the process. Although work has been ongoing with local communities to consider needs in groups of parishes, Members are of the opinion that there should be representation from parishes and rural areas within the Growth and Infrastructure Thematic Group.

With regard to the processes which will be in place to monitor the spend of CIL, the Panel has been reminded that the District Council is responsible for making final decisions on the allocation of funding and that expenditure for particular projects will be monitored. There is a legal requirement for there to be a robust monitoring and reporting mechanism to account for all CIL funding on an annual basis.

At the conclusion of their deliberations and having noted that a further report will be forthcoming in due course, the Panel has recommended that the Cabinet should approve the proposed CIL governance structure and authorise further work through the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership to develop the framework and draft Business Plan. (Item No.27 refers).

23. THE RATIONALE FOR RESERVES

The Panel has received an update on the deliberations of the Working Group which has been established to consider the Council's approach to the setting of its reserves. Having noted the key issues which have been identified as part of their deliberations, the Panel has endorsed the view that the current figure established for revenue reserves was reasonable. However, Councillor M F Shellens, one of the Members of the Working Group, has stated that this does not reflect his views.

Members have agreed that there should be further information in the Council's Budget reports to help Members understand the risks and costs related to the recommended level of reserves.

Other Matters of Interest

24. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

In conjunction with the Panels for Social and Environmental Well-Being, the Panel has reviewed the draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2011/12. Having been reminded that there is a

constitutional requirement to produce a Report each year, Members have approved the draft for publication.

25. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 – FORWARD PLAN

The Panel has been acquainted with details of the current Forward Plan of Key Decisions and has noted those items which will be presented to its future meetings.

26. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMIC WELL-BEING) – PROGRESS

The Panel has reviewed its ongoing studies. Members have noted that a meeting of the Support Services Working Group will be held shortly to draw together the conclusions arising from the review of the District Council's Document Centre.

The Panel has received an update on the current status of the Working Group which has been established to investigate the business model for the One Leisure Service. Having noted that the study had come to a standstill, Members have discussed the options for a possible way forward and agreed that the Panel should proceed with the study. To this end, the Chairman has been asked to speak to the Executive Leader about prioritising the Council's services and more generally the role of scrutiny before the review recommences.

Following the recent resignation of an Independent Member, the Panel has noted that applications have been sought for her replacement and has appointed Councillors G J Bull, S Greenall and A H Williams to a Selection Panel to interview the short-listed candidates. A further report on this matter appears elsewhere on the Agenda.

27. SCRUTINY

The Panel has considered the latest edition of the Decision Digest and discussed matters contained therein.

T V Rogers
Chairman

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Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being)

Report of the meeting held on 9th October 2012

Matters for Information

18. CHARGING FOR A SECOND GREEN BIN

The Panel has considered a proposal to charge residents for collecting a second green bin from domestic properties. The Council is looking at ways to increase its income and some London Councils charge for the collection of all green waste. Huntingdonshire District Council will continue to collect the first green bin from all its residents free of charge but it is argued that the collection of the second green bin should be regarded as a premium service and, therefore, should attract a charge. It is suggested that this would be fairer to all residents and provide a significant return for the Council because currently the majority of additional green bins are in seven wards and other wards are effectively subsidising their service.

Councillor P L E Bucknell has addressed the Panel on this matter. He has expressed the view that residents will not pay for the collection of the second green bin and will instead put green waste in household waste bins, which will have an adverse effect on the waste service budget. In addition, he is of the opinion that the change could lead to an increase in fly-tipping, that the charge amounts to a significant sum compared to the District Council's portion of the Council Tax and that properties with additional green bins tend to pay higher levels of Council Tax, which should afford them collection of a second green waste bin without having to pay an additional charge. He has suggested that VAT would apply because the charge being incurred was for a service. A Cabinet Member of a London Council has informed Councillor Bucknell that his authority made a mistake by introducing a similar charge.

The Panel has stressed that the waste collection service is the most highly valued service provided by the Council. Members have drawn attention to the fact that it is a universal service and is one of the best performing in the Country. There is a concern that this performance will worsen if this proposal is adopted. It could also damage public perception of the Council. It has been argued that the Council should instead promote recycling. In this respect, the Council could take steps to encourage composting of green waste. It has been suggested that the Council should focus on non-statutory services when looking to make savings.

The Executive Councillor for the Environment has pointed out that the change will not affect the majority of residents and that if every second green bin is returned there will be a reduction of 3.4% of waste collected. At the same time the Council has extended the range of materials it collects, which will increase recycling. He has further indicated that fly-tipping is a criminal offence and the Council will undertake enforcement action if necessary. During discussions on fly-tipping it has been established that the additional cost of enforcement has not been factored into the business case presented in the report. Experience at other authorities suggests that there will be an initial increase in fly-tipping but this will decline over time. However, if fly tipping continues to be a problem there will be a need for additional resources to deal with it.

In response to these points the Executive Councillor for the Environment has advised the Panel that, in the current economic climate, imaginative ways of raising income are needed. It is anticipated that implementation of the proposal will lead to an increase in complaints to the call centre, the majority of which will come from the seven wards which have the most additional green bins. This has been allowed for in the business case. Furthermore, the proposed charge does not represent an increase to residents' Council Tax bills; it is a charge for an additional service which residents can choose not to receive. While it is expected that adoption of the proposals will lead to many residents returning their second green bins, but it is felt that the practicalities of finding alternative means of disposing of green waste will result in residents choosing to take back their additional green bin. If the proposal is adopted, a communication strategy will be devised and implemented to educate residents about waste disposal.

Having regard to the practicalities of the proposals, the additional green bins will need to be easy to distinguish as operatives should not be tasked with responding to complaints and arbitration in questions of eligibility when going about their rounds. For reasons of cost the preferred approach is to fit new lids to additional green bins so that they can be easily identified by operatives and residents. Payback of this cost is expected to be achieved in year two.

The Panel has recommended the Cabinet not to introduce a charge for second green bins on the grounds that it will have an adverse effect on recycling rates, it is likely damage to the public's opinion of the Council, it will lead to an increase in fly tipping and the level of the charge represents a significant portion the District Council's element of Council Tax. Representatives of the Panel have attended the Cabinet meeting for consideration of this Item. (Item No. refers)

19. CORPORATE TRAVEL PLAN UPDATE

The Panel has reviewed the Council's updated Corporate Travel Plan. Having questioned how the updated Travel Plan differs from the original, the Panel has been advised that a number of minor modifications have been made, most notably relating to the incentives

offered to owners of low carbon vehicles who are able to purchase car parking permits at a reduced rate.

Members' attention has been drawn to a mapping exercise, which has been undertaken to establish where Council employees reside. The Panel has suggested that the Council should use this information to explore the possibility of providing a staff bus service from the main settlements to Pathfinder House. The viability of this suggestion will be evaluated. Similarly, the effectiveness of car sharing as a means of meeting the Travel Plan's objectives has been stressed. However, at present, while car sharing is actively encouraged there are no incentives for employees choosing to car share.

The Panel has discussed the increase in the percentage of employees cycling to work from 2006 to 2010 and has requested an analysis of the usage of cycling routes. Having commented on the lack of information relating to staff travel in 2011, Members have also requested updated statistics for the staff travel behaviour. With reference to the Council's Objectives, Targets and Indicators and specifically the Objective 'to reduce local traffic and road congestion', the Panel has questioned whether the targets are sufficiently challenging to cover a five year period. It has been suggested that these targets should be revised so that they are more challenging.

Having recognised that an increase in home working could be a means of delivering the Travel Plan's Objectives, it has been suggested that the Council should place more emphasis on home working and that there should be a systematic analysis of posts for which home working is appropriate.

The Panel has recommended the Cabinet to adopt the updated Corporate Travel Plan 2012/13 to 2017/18.

20. JAPANESE KNOTWEED

The Panel has considered a report on Japanese Knotweed, which has been produced following a request for this information from a Member. Given that the occurrence of Japanese Knotweed in Huntingdonshire is very limited and that where the Council is responsible action has been taken to deal with it, Members have decided not to pursue a study on this matter.

21. DRAINAGE

Councillor Mrs M Banerjee has acquainted the Panel with progress made by the Drainage Working Group. The Working Group has been established to engage with Anglian Water to establish its general powers and responsibilities and the limitations on its ability to prevent flooding. Members have been pleased to note that, following discussions with representatives of Anglian Water and the Environment Agency, Anglian Water and the County Council are working together to find a solution to longstanding drainage issues in Yaxley.

Other Matters of Interest

22. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY: ANNUAL REPORT

In conjunction with the Panel's for Social and Economic Well-Being, the Panel has reviewed the draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2011/2012. Having been reminded that there is a constitutional requirement to produce a report each year, Members have approved the Report for publication.

23. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING) PROGRESS

Following a request for information at the Panel's previous meeting, Councillor D M Tysoe has clarified the Cabinet's position regarding stickers on wheeled bins. Members have been advised that Speedwatch had approached Councillor Tysoe, in his capacity as Executive Councillor for the Environment, regarding the display of speed limit signs on wheeled bins across the District. Following this request, a trial has been undertaken. Councillor Tysoe has outlined his concerns that stickers can be distracting for drivers and, therefore, have an adverse impact on road safety. In this light, he has advised Members that he needs to be assured that firm evidence has been produced by Speedwatch of their benefits before he would take any further decisions regarding the Council's policy on stickers on wheeled bins. Any scheme would have to be well thought out, managed and policed.

24. WORK PLAN

The Panel has reviewed the programme of studies being undertaken by the other Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

25. SCRUTINY

The Panel has considered the latest edition of the Decision Digest and discussed the matters contained therein. In so doing Members have been informed that testing of proposals for changes to Council Tax discounts and exemptions has been undertaken to ensure they can be implemented and will increase the Council's income

D Harty
Chairman

Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being)

Report of the meeting held on 2nd October 2012

Matters for Information

22. HOUSING STRATEGY 2012-15

The Panel has considered the adoption of a new Housing Strategy 2012-15 for Huntingdonshire. Members' attention has been drawn to a number of achievements made under the previous Housing Strategy 2006-11 and to various statistics for the Huntingdonshire area, in particular, those relating to anticipated population projections and average house prices. These statistics indicate that there is a need to maximise opportunities to deliver more affordable housing. The revised Strategy focuses on the Council's new priority areas.

With regard to the impact of developments on individuals' quality of life, the Panel has been advised that there is a need to ensure the right balance is achieved and that due process is followed. The National Planning Policy Framework places a duty on the Council to meet the housing needs of the District. The Council endeavours to comply with this duty whilst at the same time ensuring that large scale developments are located in the least harmful areas. The Panel has concluded that good communication is important in terms of challenging negative attitudes towards development.

The Panel has discussed private sector rental rates and how they compare with the public sector. This is a matter, which is being pursued by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being). A recent report to that Panel reveals that there has been little change in rent levels.

Other matters discussed by the Panel include homelessness levels within the District and the role and importance of community planning within Parishes. During community planning some communities identify older people's homes as one of their community priority areas. These and other such views will assist with shaping local planning policy in future years.

The Panel has recommended the Cabinet to endorse the Housing Strategy 2012-15.

23. DRAFT TENANCY STRATEGY

The Panel has supported the adoption of a Tenancy Strategy for Huntingdonshire. There is a requirement under the Localism Act 2011 that the Council has a Tenancy Strategy. The Strategy is based on seven key principles, including the expectation that social housing landlords will take a proactive approach to tackling anti-social behaviour. The most significant change that the Strategy will introduce is fixed term tenancies for social housing tenants. All social housing within the District is managed by Registered Providers. These Providers are not required to offer this option to their tenants but they are expected to have regard to the Council's Strategy when setting their own policies.

Of the 9,000 social homes available within the District, around 8,000 are managed by Luminus. Luminus has indicated that it will introduce fixed term tenancies to new tenants from April 2013 onwards. This will not affect tenants on existing assured tenancies (even if they transfer to another property) or those in receipt of exemptions. Tenants' circumstances will be reviewed by social landlords prior to the end of their fixed term and all housing options will be assessed, including those on offer within the private sector. It is intended that the proposals will encourage more effective utilisation of social housing whilst at the same time alleviating some of the pressures on the Housing Register.

Targeted consultation with social tenants has not been undertaken by the Council. This is a matter for Registered Providers as it will be their own policies that affect tenants. Work is being undertaken in conjunction with Registered Providers to communicate the changes to affected tenants.

24. HUNTINGDONSHIRE CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU

The Executive Leader has addressed the Panel on social aspects of the recent announcement by the Huntingdonshire CAB that it will go into voluntary liquidation. A number of discussions have been held between the Council and the CAB in the months leading up to the announcement over the financial viability of the organisation. The CAB provides support to the District's residents in key areas and attempts are being made to work positively with the organisation to manage the situation and to identify the next steps forward. Service is expected to cease in December 2012 and interim arrangements are currently being planned for the final quarter of the financial year, with consideration also being given to finding a long term solution for Huntingdonshire. Any future service provision will be made available across the whole District.

31st October 2012 marks the closing date for applications under the Council's new voluntary sector funding arrangements. It is expected that some proposals will be forthcoming on behalf of the CAB. All Members will receive a summary of the applications that are received prior to any decisions being made by the relevant Executive Members.

The Panel has commented on the valuable service provided by the CAB's volunteers. These volunteers will have an important role during the transition period, particularly by maintaining communications with the public. It will be important that trained volunteers can be retained and that an ongoing training and development programme for volunteers is maintained. The Panel has also indicated that the organisation should have adequate insurance cover.

A further update will be provided to the Panel in November 2012.

25. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2011/12

The Panel has reviewed the draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2011/12. Having been reminded that under the Council's Constitution a Report has to be produced each year, Members have approved the draft for publication.

26. CAMBRIDGESHIRE ADULTS, WELLBEING AND HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillor R J West has updated the Panel on matters currently being considered by the Cambridgeshire Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, including Clinical Commissioning Groups and the Adult Social Care Integrated Plan.

Other Matters of Interest

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

The Panel has reviewed its programme of studies. An update has been delivered on Circle Healthcare's Annual General Meeting and the Corporate Plan, Consultation Processes and Social Well-Being Working Groups.

At the request of the Corporate Governance Panel, a review of the effectiveness of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels will be undertaken starting on 22nd October 2012. Councillors S J Criswell, R J West and Mrs P A Jordan, together with Mr R Coxhead, will be participating in the review process, alongside representatives of the other Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

The Panel has agreed to extend an invitation to Circle Healthcare to attend the Panel's March 2013 meeting. This will be timely given that it will be a year since Circle addressed the Panel.

28. WORK PLAN STUDIES

The Panel has received details of studies being undertaken by the other Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

29. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000: FORWARD PLAN

The Panel has been acquainted with the current Forward Plan of Key Decisions. The item entitled "Town and Parish Council Charter" will be presented to the Panel in November 2012.

30. SCRUTINY

The Panel has considered the latest edition of the Decision Digest and discussed matters contained therein.

S J Criswell
Chairman

Cabinet

Report of the meeting held on 18th October 2012

Matter for Decision

23. LEADERSHIP DIRECTION

In conjunction with the Overview and Scrutiny Panels and by way of a report by the Corporate Team Manager, the Cabinet has been acquainted with the Council's themes and aims contained in the Leadership Direction. As this item is considered elsewhere on the Council's agenda, the Cabinet

RECOMMEND

that the Council adopts the Leadership Direction.

Matters for Information

24. FINANCIAL MONITORING CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2012/13

The Cabinet has been acquainted with variations in the capital programme in the current year and has considered cost variations and timing changes for 2013/14.

25. FINANCIAL MONITORING REVENUE BUDGET 2012/13

The Cabinet has noted the expected revenue budget variations already identified in the current year. Executive Councillors were advised that the expected outturn for revenue expenditure was £22m which represented a slight increase in that previously forecast due to reductions in a number of income streams including estate properties, planning fees, car parks, markets and search fees.

26. CHARGING FOR A SECOND GREEN BIN

Consideration has been given by the Cabinet to a proposal to reduce the cost of the refuse and recycling service by introducing an annual charge of £40 for an additional green waste bin. Members noted that under the proposals the free collection of the first green bin for all residents will remain but the collection of additional green bins will be regarded as a premium service for which a charge will be levied.

As part of their deliberations, the Cabinet had regard to representations made at the meeting by Councillor I C Bates and to the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) (Item No. 18 of their Report refers). Councillor Bates explained that the waste collection service is a highly valued service and any charge for an additional bin will damage the public perception of the Council and will result in fly tipping. He stressed that the proposal may impact on the level of green waste collected at a time when the Council should be looking to increase performance by promoting recycling. In acknowledging that the Council needs to make further savings, Councillor Bates suggested that these should focus on non-statutory services such as leisure.

In discussing the information before them, Executive Councillors reiterated that the Council constantly reviewed all services to identify savings as part of the budget process. Members were of the view that the charge would impact on a very small percentage of the District's population. With regard to alternative saving streams, the Cabinet reported that a Business Plan for the future of the One Leisure Service would be considered at the Cabinet's December meeting.

Having received a request by the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being), that the Panel be given an opportunity to consider the proposal, the Cabinet deferred the matter to their next meeting to enable this to happen.

27. PROPOSED CIL GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES

Having regard to the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) (Item No.22 of their Report refers), the Cabinet has approved a proposed governance structure for dealing with CIL expenditure.

In endorsing a proposed governance structure, the Cabinet has supported the development of a framework and draft business plan by partners through the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership. The business plan will be created by the Growth and Infrastructure arm of the Partnership and will be a living document, able to adapt to development proposals that will emerge as part of the implementation phase. Members noted that the final document will be endorsed by the Partnership Board prior to it being formally signed off or renegotiated by the Cabinet. With this in mind, the Cabinet has requested the Head of Planning and Housing Strategy to liaise with the Heads of Finance and of Legal and Democratic Services to agree procedural and management protocols.

28. HOUSING STRATEGY 2012-2015

Having regard to the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) (Item No.22 of their Report refers), the Cabinet has endorsed the content of the Housing Strategy 2012-15 for Huntingdonshire. The Strategy provides a short analysis of the key housing and related issues facing the District and sets out the

Council's plans for working in partnership over the next few years to meet identified needs.

29. DRAFT TENANCY STRATEGY

Further to Item No.23 of the Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) the Cabinet has endorsed the contents of the draft Tenancy Strategy for Huntingdonshire. The Strategy is a requirement of the Localism Act 2011 and sets out the matters to which registered providers of social housing in the district should have regard to when formulating policies relating to the granting and renewal of tenancies. Particular attention was drawn to the Strategy's seven key principles which social housing providers will be encouraged to support within their policies. These relate to the offer of fixed term tenancies, affordable rents, conversions and housing management.

30. COMMUNITY RIGHT TO CHALLENGE

Along with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) (Item No.21 of their Report refers), the Cabinet has considered proposed arrangements for the operation of the new Community Right to Challenge. The Localism Act 2011 introduces a right for defined organisations and persons to submit an expression of interest in taking over the provision of a service on behalf of the Council. Members noted that where a valid expression is received, the Council will be required to undertake a procurement exercise for that service which may lead to the Council awarding a contract for the service provision. Having considered the proposed process for dealing with expressions, the Cabinet has authorised the Managing Directors, after consultation with the appropriate Heads of Service and the relevant Executive Councillor, to accept or reject an expression of interest on behalf of the Council.

31. UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE TRAVEL PLAN

Having regard to the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) (Item No.19 of their Report refers), the Cabinet has endorsed the content of the updated Corporate Travel Plan for 2012-18. The plan promotes four main objectives aimed at lowering costs for the authority, reducing traffic congestion in the District and improving the health and well-being of the Council's employees.

In discussing the document, the Cabinet has considered a suggestion by the Scrutiny Panel that the Council should explore the possibility of providing a bus service from the main settlements to Pathfinder House. Executive Councillors were of the opinion that such an arrangement was not viable in terms of its environmental impact and the percentage of employees it would reach. However, Executive Councillors concurred with the Panel that greater emphasis should be placed on home working and the Council's objectives and targets revised so that they are more challenging.

**32. HOUSING BENEFIT –
INTRODUCTION OF RISK BASED VERIFICATION**

(The following item was considered as a confidential item under paragraph 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.)

Along with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) (Item No.19 of their Report refers), the Cabinet has considered a proposal to introduce Risk Based Verification for new Housing and Council Tax Benefit claims that are submitted through the Council's online claim facility. The scheme is a tool to reduce fraud and error by focusing on claims where the risk of the claimant providing incorrect information or evidence is deemed to be high.

Having noted that the process will be monitored by the District Council's Auditors to ensure that it works correctly and that the level of fraud should reduce as a result of its implementation, the Cabinet has supported the arrangements and the content of a Benefits Risk Based Verification Policy.

J D Ablewhite
Chairman

Development Management Panel

Report of the meeting held on 15th October 2012

Matters for Information

9. DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS

The Panel has determined ten applications for development and of these six were approved and four refused. Applications related to development for a variety of purposes including agricultural, industrial and commercial as well as domestic householder proposals. Having originally deferred an application to allow Members to undertake an accompanied site visit, the Panel reconsidered a proposal to replace two existing gaia turbines with two new wind turbines and ancillary equipment at Hamerton Zoo Park, north east of Hamerton village. The turbines will generate electricity for consumption by the Zoo with any surplus intending to be exported back to the National Grid. The Panel agreed to approve the application, subject to conditions, having considered representations from the Ward Councillor, the Chairman of the Parish Meeting and the applicant.

10. APPEAL DECISIONS

The Panel regularly review the outcome of appeal cases and decisions made by the Planning Inspectorate. The reasoning of an Inspector offers a valuable insight to the planning process. Having regard to a recent decision relating to proposed development on Common Lane, Hemingford Abbots and whilst the appeal was dismissed by the Inspector, an application for the partial award of costs was approved. The Panel has been reminded how important it is to justify each term used in every reason given for refusal of an application given the opportunity for challenge by the Inspector and the potential for award of costs should the Council not be able to adequately substantiate a reason for refusal.

D B Dew
Chairman

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Licensing Committee

Report of the meeting held on 23rd October 2012

Matters for Information

2. GAMBLING ACT 2005 – STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

The Committee has endorsed a revised statement of principles under the Gambling Act 2005 prior to its consideration by the Cabinet.

The current statement came into effect on 31st January 2010 for a period of three years following its approval by the Council, and consequently the revised statement will need to be approved to have effect from 31st January 2013.

The revised statement has been modelled on the existing document and amended to have regard to updated guidance issued by the Secretary of State and legislative changes that have taken place in the intervening period.

A consultation has been carried out on the new draft statement and following consideration by the Cabinet at its meeting in November, the revised statement will be submitted to the Council for approval at the meeting to be held on 19th December 2012.

3. LICENSING ACT 2003 – RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY DELEGATIONS

The Committee has authorised the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to act on behalf of the Licensing Authority for the purpose of making representations under the Licensing Act 2003.

The Licensing Authority was included as a new category of Responsible Authority (RA) following amendments to the Licensing Act 2003 and provisions in the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act which came into force in April 2012. As a consequence, the Licensing Authority is now able to make representations and initiate a review of a licensed premise in addition to other RAs. The delegation ensures a clear distinction between the Officer acting as the RA and the Officer preparing the report and presenting it to the Licensing Sub-Committee.

4. LICENSING ACT 2003 – DELEGATION OF FUNCTIONS

The Committee has approved a schedule of delegations under the Licensing Act 2003. The delegations have been amended to incorporate certain provisions of the Police Reform and Social

Responsibility Act 2011 which came into effect on 25 April 2012 and imposed additional duties on the Licensing Authority. Guidance issued by the Secretary of State recommends that, in the interests of speed and efficiency, decision making should be delegated to Officers as far as is permissible under the legislation.

J W Davies
Chairman

Corporate Governance Panel

Report of the meeting held on 25th September 2012

Matters for Information

11. ANNUAL REPORT ON THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT, ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION REGULATIONS AND DATA PROTECTION ACT

The Panel has received a report on the number of requests received by the Council under the Freedom of Information Act, Environmental Information Regulations and Data Protection Act. At the request of the Panel, future reports will include the previous year's statistics for comparative purposes. Matters discussed include the achievement of the deadline set by the Coalition Government in relation to the publication of any items of expenditure over the sum of £500 and the cost to the Council for complying with these legislative requirements.

12. AUDITORS REPORT – FINAL ACCOUNTS 2010/11

A report by the external auditors outlining the findings of their audit of the Council's 2010/11 final accounts was received and noted by the Panel.

13. INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE: ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31ST AUGUST 2012

Under the requirements of the 2006 Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government, the Panel was provided with the Audit and Risk Manager's opinion that the Council has in place adequate controls to manage identified risks to its objectives and the risks inherent in undertaking its work.

Disappointment was expressed that only 48% of agreed audit actions were introduced on time and that a very modest target of 60% had been set. Responsibility for these actions lies with service managers. Owing to their concerns, the Panel has requested that their comments be relayed to the Executive Councillor for Resources.

It was confirmed to Members that it was the role of the external auditor to gain an understanding of the key controls in place for the Council's financial accounts and to undertake detailed testing of its controls and systems. It is not their role to express a view on the Council's internal audit service, but to have regard for their work.

14. REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE

As required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2011, the outcome of a review of the effectiveness of the Internal Audit Service was reported to the Panel. A Peer Review of the Internal Audit Service will be undertaken in October, the outcome of which will be reported to the Panel at its December meeting.

15. REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CORPORATE GOVERNANCE PANEL

The outcome of a review undertaken by the Chairman on the effectiveness of the Panel was noted by Members. The Chairman has concluded that there is a need for the Panel to be more proactively aware of relevant legal and regulatory issues and best practice developments. Therefore, the Panel will, in future, receive reports on the governance of the pay review, business continuity plan and the Local Plan.

16. RISK REGISTER

Changes made to the Risk Register between the period 14th March to 31st August 2012 were noted by the Panel.

17. COMPLAINTS

Lessons learnt by the Council on the cases referred to the Local Government Ombudsman were reported to the Panel. Two complaints were received in 2011/12, both relating to the same matter.

18. GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

Subject to minor amendments to the Governance Statement 2011/12, Members have authorised the Chairman of the Panel to sign the Statement on behalf of the Council. The changes relate to the deletion of reference to the Local Area Agreement and an amendment to the date scheduled for the review of the effectiveness of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

19. APPROVAL FOR PUBLICATION OF THE 2011/12 ACCOUNTS

The Panel was apprised of the process required to be undertaken prior to the publication of the 2011/12 final accounts. This includes receiving the auditor's report on the audit of the 2011/12 accounts, together with their Letter of Representation and the draft Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2012.

Delegated authority has been given to the Managing Director (Resources) to sign the Letter of Representation on behalf of the Council and, following consultation with the Chairman of the Panel, to make any final non-material changes to the 2011/12 accounts. The

Panel has also authorised the Chairman of the Panel to sign the accounts on behalf of the Council.

20. TRAINING OF PANEL MEMBERS

Members of the Panel received details of their anticipated work programme over the ensuing year and in doing so agreed to address any future training requirements on a meeting by meeting basis.

**21. HOUSING BENEFIT –
INTRODUCTION OF RISK BASED VERIFICATION**

(This item was submitted as a Part 2 item under Paragraph 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.)

Consideration was given to a proposal to introduce risk based verification on new Housing and Council Tax Benefit claims submitted through the Council's online claim facility. This has arisen following a pilot undertaken by a number of local authorities across the country and will enable the Council to categorise applications into one of the three risk groups of high, medium or low. Efficiencies of up to 50% in the caseload for low risk claims and improved error detection rates for high risk cases are expected as a result of the proposals.

22. CODE OF PROCUREMENT: TENDER QUOTATION AND REVIEW

(This item was submitted as a Part 2 item under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.)

The Panel has expressed their disappointment over the lack of compliance with the Council's Code of Procurement. At the request of the Panel, an education and training programme will be developed to encourage improved compliance with the Code. Assurances have been delivered that the Code is being adhered to in the case of large contracts.

Members have discussed a number of matters including the appointment of sub-contractors, the publicity undertaken by the Council to attract potential contractors, the role of the Internal Audit Team in opening tenders and the importance of communication.

Amendments to the existing Code are required to enable provision for emergency procedures relating to the receipt of contracts in excess of £50,000 and the need for this to be extended to include quotations. These amendments will be included within the annual review of the Code which will be reported to the Panel at its March 2013 meeting.

The Audit and Risk Manager reported that he would be undertaking a further piece of work on the effective utilisation of the procurement register. This was welcomed by the Panel given that they are not satisfied that the Internal Audit Service is being informed of all tenders received.

23. LESSONS LEARNT – 2010/11 ACCOUNTS

(This item was submitted as a Part 2 item under Paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.)

The Panel has endorsed a series of recommendations which have been accepted by the Managing Director (Resources) to improve the Council's processes to finalise the Council's financial accounts in future years. Disquiet continues to be expressed by Members over the delay with the publication of the 2010/11 accounts and in particular, at the lack of detail provided on the additional costs incurred by the Council as a result of the delay.

E R Butler
Chairman