

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING) held in Civic Suite 1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 11 December 2012.

PRESENT: Councillor D Harty – Chairman.

Councillors M G Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, I C Bates, J W Davies, D A Giles, G J Harlock and Mrs D C Reynolds.

Messrs D Hopkins and M Phillips.

APOLOGY: An Apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor C R Hyams.

55. MINUTES

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

56. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

57. NOTICE OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Panel considered and noted the current Notice of Executive Decisions (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which had been prepared by the Executive Leader of the Council for the period 1st December 2012 to 31st March 2013. The Panel requested sight of the Revision of the Wind Power Supplementary Planning Document at a future meeting. The Scrutiny and Review Manager then reported that a Member presentation on the A14 by the Head of Planning and Strategic Housing would be arranged at an appropriate time but that it was unlikely that the item would be going before the Cabinet at its January 2013 meeting.

58. CHARGING FOR A SECOND GREEN BIN - CALL IN

(Councillor J D Ablewhite, Executive Leader of the Council, and Councillor D M Tysoe, Executive Councillor for Environment, were in attendance for consideration of this item).

Pursuant to Minute No. 12/38 and following publication of the Cabinet's decision on 22nd November 2012 regarding charging for a second green bin, the Panel gave this matter further consideration. The reasons for the call-in were outlined within a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). The Panel was disappointed that its previous recommendation had not been accepted by the Cabinet.

The three Members who had called in the matter felt that the decision reached by the Cabinet was ambiguous and unclear and expressed the view that a formal assessment should be made of the environmental impacts of the proposals. Furthermore, it was suggested that a list of all the possible savings the Council might make should be compiled and prioritised before a decision was taken on charging for a second green bin.

The Executive Leader of the Council informed the Panel that the Cabinet intended to review all the Council's options for making savings and increasing income, including the proposal to charge for collecting second green bins, later in the year. If no alternatives were identified, then it was likely that the scheme would proceed. However, the Panel was of the view that if a comprehensive exercise was going to be undertaken to review the Council's finances, it would be premature to make an "in principle" decision on one item.

In response to a question on what other options for savings had been considered, the Executive Leader advised that approximately £1m had already been saved and others were being considered. Members were reminded of the adoption of the Leadership Direction, one of the targets of which was to achieve a balanced budget. To do this, savings in the order of £3.2m would be required by 2017/18. All options, therefore, were being examined. The Executive Leader gave an undertaking that he would keep Members informed of progress in this respect.

The Panel recognised the need for savings to be made and accepted that the current proposal might need to be implemented. Members were, however, of the view that a judgement could not be made on charging for collecting second green bins unless a comprehensive assessment of all the Council's options was made available. The Cabinet was requested to produce a list of all possible savings and to prioritise them. Councillor T V Rogers indicated that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) also advocated this approach. In addition, it was suggested that a list of savings already made should be produced to assist the decision making process.

Members received clarification of a number of operational matters connected with the proposal, including whether churches and village halls would be charged, if any operational savings would be achieved and when particular bins would be collected. A suggestion was made that a price analysis was required. On the basis of their deliberations, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the option to charge for the collection of second green bins be referred back to the Cabinet; and
- (b) that the Cabinet be recommended to note the proposal to charge for collecting second green bins and to consider it during its deliberations on all the Council's options for improving its financial position.

59. WASTE COLLECTION ROUND OPTIMISATION

(Councillor D M Tysoe, Executive Councillor for Environment, was in attendance for consideration of this item).

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Operations (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) providing an update on the rescheduling of the current waste collection rounds, which were last reviewed in 2007. By way of background, the Executive Councillor for Environment advised that any changes arising from the review were due to be implemented by the Council in February 2013.

Whilst it had been anticipated that the review might result in the loss of one waste collection round, having taken into account property growth levels within the District, this was not likely to be possible as it would mean reinstating this round at a later date. With this in mind, the purpose of the review, therefore, would be to make the service more effective and efficient, whilst providing an opportunity for the Council to reiterate some of its key waste and recycling messages to the residents of Huntingdonshire. One of the main savings expected from the review was that produced by reduced fuel consumption, which would provide a further environmental benefit for the Council.

Owing to problems with the software employed during the round rescheduling process, the revised rounds were now scheduled to go live on 25th February 2013. It was reported that all Members would receive an information pack outlining the changes prior to any publicity being undertaken on the new rounds. The Panel welcomed the Communications Plan which had been developed to publicise the changes, in particular those aspects of it relating to educating residents on what materials could and could not be recycled through their blue bins.

RESOLVED

that the content of the report now submitted be noted.

60. CARBON MANAGEMENT PLAN

(Councillor D M Tysoe, Executive Councillor for Environment, was in attendance for consideration of this item).

With the aid of a report by the Head of Environmental Management (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel was acquainted with the background to the Carbon Management Plan, which was currently in its third year of operation. Members noted that the Council was on target to achieve a 30% reduction in CO2 emissions from the Council's estate by 2013/14. To date, a 20% reduction had been achieved. The Head of Environmental Management reported that a saving of £300,000 had been realised, with a further saving of £700,000 expected to be made by 2013/14.

The Panel discussed a number of matters, including whether the target of 30% had been regarded as being stretching at the time the Plan was developed, the role of the Council's Environmental Resource Efficiency Group in promoting cross departmental working, particularly within the Operations Division and across the One Leisure

sites, and the receipt of an interest free Salix loan to assist with energy efficiency improvements at One Leisure St Ives. Other matters discussed included the impact of the solar photovoltaic PV panels at Eastfield House and the emergence of environmental initiatives which might generate a financial return to the Council. At the request of the Panel, the Head of Environmental Management undertook to clarify the figures reported in relation to the cost and savings identified for pool covers across the One Leisure sites and to establish whether the overall savings figures had taken account of inflation.

Having congratulated the Head of Environmental Management and his staff on the valuable contributions they had made in achieving the carbon reduction targets, the Panel

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be recommended to

- (a) note the excellent progress made towards the implementation of the Council's Carbon Management Plan and the positive impact this has had on reducing energy use and energy spending; and
- (b) support ongoing cross-departmental working to maximise cost savings and the continued use of the Salix ring-fenced funding and Environment Strategy Capital funding to implement further energy saving projects.

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

The Panel received and noted a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which contained details of actions taken in response to recent discussions and decisions. In doing so, Members were informed that owing to resource constraints within the Planning department, alternative ways of finalising the Tree Strategy were currently being considered and Councillor I C Bates undertook to make enquiries with Hilton Parish Council with regard to the wheelie bin sticker pilot in the village. The Design Principles for Future Developments Working Group would meet once the draft revised Design Guide was available. Finally, having regard to drainage issues previously experienced in St Audrey's Lane, St Ives, Councillor J W Davies confirmed that the recent flooding events had not had a negative impact upon residents within the Town.

62. WORK PLAN STUDIES

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

63. SCRUTINY

The 129th Edition of the Decision Digest (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) was received and noted.

Chairman