

A meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SOCIAL WELL-BEING)** will be held in **CIVIC SUITE 0.1A, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, PE29 3TN** on **TUESDAY, 8 JANUARY 2013** at **7:00 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

**Contact  
(01480)**

## **APOLOGIES**

### **1. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 6)**

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 4th December 2012.

**Miss H Ali  
388006**

**2 Minutes.**

### **2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

To receive from Members declarations as to disclosable pecuniary, non-disclosable pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests in relation to any Agenda Items. See Notes below.

**2 Minutes.**

### **3. NOTICE OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS (Pages 7 - 12)**

A copy of the current Notice of Executive Decisions, which was published on 19th December 2012 is attached. Members are invited to note the Decisions and to comment as appropriate on any items contained therein.

**Mrs H Taylor  
388008**

**10 Minutes.**

### **4. HOUSING BENEFIT CHANGES AND THE POTENTIAL IMPACT ON HUNTINGDONSHIRE (Pages 13 - 20)**

To receive a report from the Head of Customer Services providing an update on housing benefit changes and the potential impact upon Huntingdonshire.

**Mrs J Barber  
388105**

*Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) have been invited to attend for discussion on this item.*

**20 Minutes.**

**5. LOCAL PLAN 2036 - PROVISION OF SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND IMPACT UPON HOMELESSNESS**

To receive a verbal update from the Head of Planning and Housing Strategy on the impact of the Local Plan 2036 upon the provision of social and affordable housing and the impact upon homelessness.

**S Ingram  
388400**

**20 Minutes.**

**6. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

To resolve:-

to exclude the press and public from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

**2 Minutes.**

**7. HUNTINGDON GYM**

To consider a proposal relating to Huntingdon Gym.

**C Meadowcroft  
388021**

*Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) have been invited to attend for discussion on this item.*

**20 Minutes.**

**8. RE-ADMITTANCE OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

To resolve:-

to re-admit the press and public to the meeting.

**2 Minutes.**

**9. NOTIFICATION OF GRANT AID AWARDS FOR 2013-14 AND DETAILS OF INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS FOR ADVICE SERVICES (JANUARY - MARCH 2013) (Pages 21 - 24)**

To receive a report from the Head of Environmental and Community Health Services on grant aid awards for 2013-14 and details of interim arrangements for advisory services in January-March 2013.

**D Smith / S Lammin  
388377 / 388280**

**15 Minutes.**

**10. CAMBRIDGESHIRE ADULTS, WELLBEING AND HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

To receive an update from Councillor R J West on the outcome of recent meetings of the Cambridgeshire Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**5 Minutes.**

**11. WORK PLAN STUDIES** (Pages 25 - 32)

To consider, with the aid of a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, the current programme of Overview and Scrutiny studies.

**Miss H Ali  
388006**

**10 Minutes.**

**12. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SOCIAL WELL-BEING) - PROGRESS** (Pages 33 - 40)

To consider a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services on the Panel's programme of studies.

**Miss H Ali  
388006**

**15 Minutes.**

**13. SCRUTINY** (Pages 41 - 48)

To scrutinise decisions as set out in the Decision Digest and to raise any other matters for scrutiny that fall within the remit of the Panel.

**5 Minutes.**

Dated this 21 day of December  
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 Miss H Ali, Democratic Services Officer, Tel No: (01480) 388006 / email: [Habbiba.Ali@huntingdonshire.gov.uk](mailto:Habbiba.Ali@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 Panel.**

**Specific enquiries with regard to items on the Agenda should be directed towards the Contact Officer.**

**Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting as observers except during consideration of confidential or exempt items of business.**

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

**If you would like a translation of Agenda/Minutes/Reports or would like a large text version or an audio version please contact the Democratic Services Manager and we will try to accommodate your needs.**

**Emergency Procedure**

*In the event of the fire alarm being sounded and on the instruction of the Meeting Administrator, all attendees are requested to vacate the building via the closest emergency exit.*

# Agenda Item 1

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SOCIAL WELL-BEING) held in Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 4 December 2012.

PRESENT: Councillor S J Criswell – Chairman.

Councillors S Akthar, K M Baker, R C Carter, P Kadewere, M C Oliver, J W G Pethard and R J West.

R Coxhead and Mrs M Nicholas – Co-opted Members.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors R Fuller and Mrs P A Jordan.

### **63. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 6th November 2012 were approved as correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **64. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

No declarations were received.

### **65. 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.

### **66. NHS CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH: FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE REPORT**

*(Mrs S Shuttlewood, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Groups, was in attendance for consideration of this item).*

Pursuant to Minute No. 12/61 and with the aid of reports prepared by NHS Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book), the Panel was updated on the financial and operational performance of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital. Further updates were tabled at the meeting (copies of which are also appended in the Minute Book) providing the latest performance statistics which were due to be considered by the NHS Board the following day.

In introducing the reports, Mrs S Shuttlewood, representative of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group,

delivered an outline of the Commissioning Group's role in monitoring the performance of the Hospital. In so doing, it was reported that a rigorous contractual performance monitoring regime had been adopted to ensure that the standards required of the Hospital were being delivered. Members were encouraged to note that of the 46 acute providers within the County, Hinchingsbrooke's performance currently came in at 8th place in terms of its overall performance. Furthermore, the Panel was advised that the Hospital could be penalised financially if it was felt that it was not adhering to the terms of the contract or implementing appropriate remedial action when required to do so. Areas of current concern relating to the Hospital included the recent norovirus outbreak and its impact upon the availability of bed space which, in turn, had resulted in delays in waiting times within the Accident and Emergency Department, the need for improved performance against targets for treating cancer patients and the anticipated financial deficit expected at the end of the 2012/13 financial year.

The Panel discussed a number of matters including the powers held by the Commissioning Group, the requirement to report upon national health standards, the recent award received by the Maternity Unit, the cleanliness standards of the Hospital, the risks associated with the imposition of financial penalties on the Hospital, current issues with the Ambulance Service, delayed discharges, the availability of care in the community services and the Commissioning Group's relationship with Circle Healthcare. Clarification was then sought and received on the reasons for the reported financial deficit and Members discussed the Hospital's progress against the Quality, Innovation, Prevention and Productivity programme.

In terms of the way forward, it was agreed that regular reports would continue to be provided on the Hospital. Following a suggestion made by the Chairman that a Joint Working Group should be established comprising representatives of the Panel and the County Council's Cambridgeshire Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it was

#### RESOLVED

Councillors S J Criswell, P Kadewere, M C Oliver and R J West, together with Mr R Coxhead, be appointed on to a Working Group to pursue further investigations into Hinchingsbrooke Hospital.

#### **67. HUNTINGDONSHIRE CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU**

*(Councillor J D Ablewhite, Executive Leader of the Council, Councillor T D Sanderson, Executive Member for Healthy and Active Communities, and Mr M Mealing, Chairman of the Huntingdonshire Citizens Advice Bureau, were in attendance for consideration of this item).*

*(Councillor P J Downes was in attendance for this item).*

Pursuant to Minute No. 12/56, the Panel received a further update on recent developments relating to the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and the provision of advice services in Huntingdonshire. Councillor J

D Ablewhite, Executive Leader of the Council, reminded the Panel of the background to the decision by the CAB to go into voluntary liquidation and the steps which had been undertaken prior to reaching this decision.

Councillor T D Sanderson, Executive Councillor for Healthy and Active Communities, then reported upon the conclusions which had been reached on 21st November 2012, when the applications which had been received under the Council's new voluntary sector funding arrangements were determined. It was reported that Rural Cambs CAB had been identified as the preferred bidder for the delivery of advisory services across the District. The organisation's bid would provide for a four day service in Huntingdon and a three day service in St Neots with debt advisory services being provided at both locations one day each week. In addition, a three hour outreach session would be provided in Yaxley, St Neots and St Ives through a rotation basis with email, telephone and web advisory services also made available alongside front line services.

Councillor Sanderson went on to state that owing to the terms of the current service level agreement with the Huntingdonshire CAB a formal announcement cannot on the outcome of the bidding process could not be made until 8th December 2012. Once the formal announcement had been made, steps would then be taken to provide interim services for the period January to March 2013 inclusive. It was expected that an approach would be made to the successful bidder for this purpose. Mr M Mealing, Chairman of the CAB, reported that the CAB had now formally closed to the public but that debt advisory services would continue to be provided until 21st December 2012.

Councillor P J Downes expressed concerns over the process, which had been adopted to determine the applications received under the new voluntary sector funding arrangements. He was of the opinion that the bidders should have been given the opportunity to address Members to explain how they would meet the grant criteria. In response, the Executive Leader and Executive Councillor for Healthy and Active Communities assured Members that due process had been followed and the preferred bidder would be able to meet the needs of the District.

Members agreed that the Voluntary Sector Working Group, previously established by the Panel, would take part in regular review meetings with the successful bidder and the Executive Councillor for Healthy and Active Communities to monitor the performance of the service. Whilst six monthly meetings had been suggested, it was agreed that more frequent meetings could be held if necessary.

A brief discussion then ensued on the fact that grants could be tapered to encourage recipients to obtain other funding and to allow the remaining money to be used for other proposals. This had been agreed by Cabinet at its meeting in July 2012.

In concluding their discussions, the Executive Leader, on behalf of the Council, placed on record his thanks to Mr Mealing and the Huntingdonshire CAB for their efforts over the years.

## 68. COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT FROM 1ST APRIL 2013

*(Councillor B S Chapman, Executive Councillor for Customer Services, was in attendance for consideration of this item).*

With the aid of a report by the Head of Customer Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel gave consideration to a proposal to adopt a new local Council Tax Support scheme for the District. This scheme would supersede the current national Council Tax Benefit scheme on 1st April 2013.

By way of background, the Executive Councillor for Customer Services acquainted Members with the proposals and drew their attention to the impact of the scheme upon the District whilst providing a comparison of it to the Government's proposed transitional scheme. The Panel was advised that the draft scheme had been subject to consultation in late summer, which had resulted in changes being made relating to the backdating of payments for up to six months and to the capital limit, which would remain at the existing Council Tax Benefit level of £16,000. These changes had been incorporated within the new scheme.

The Panel discussed at length the impact of the proposals upon Town and Parish precepts. Members acknowledged the difficulties faced by the Head of Customer Services in providing accurate estimates on Council Tax calculations given that they depend on a Government announcement which was expected on 13th December 2012. Town and Parish Councils had been advised by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils to defer setting their precepts until this announcement had been made. At the request of the Panel, it was agreed that a report outlining the impact of this process on Town and Parish Councils would be made available to Members in February 2013.

Members discussed the groups of individuals who would no longer be eligible for Council Tax assistance under the new scheme; namely those in receipt of Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance and Employment Support Allowance. The Panel also considered the recommendation contained within the Equality Impact Assessment relating to the definition of vulnerable groups. The Head of Customer Services advised that legal opinion would be obtained on this matter. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be recommended

- (a) to have due regard to the findings of the Equality Impact Assessment and approve the proposed Council Tax Support scheme for the District;
- (b) to authorise the Head of Customer Services to administer the Council Tax Support scheme in accordance with Section 10 and Schedule 4 of the Local Government Finance Act 2012; and



- (c) to recommend to Council the subsequent amendments to the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

**69. POTENTIAL MERGER BETWEEN CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND SUFFOLK FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES: CONSULTATION RESPONSE**

Pursuant to Minute No. 12/55, the Panel considered a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) seeking the Panel's endorsement of a response to the consultation on the proposals for further collaboration up to a full merger between Cambridgeshire and Suffolk Fire and Rescue Services.

**RESOLVED**

- (a) that Sections 3 and 4 of the report now submitted be endorsed as the basis for the Panel's response to the consultation on the proposals for further collaboration up to a full merger between Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service and Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service; and
- (b) that Officers be authorised to submit the response directly to the Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service.

**70. CAMBRIDGESHIRE ADULTS, WELLBEING AND HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The Panel received and noted the Minutes of the meeting of the Cambridgeshire Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 25th October 2012 (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). Councillor R J West reported upon a recent meeting of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working Group on Mental Health Services Across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, where consideration had been given to the Joint Commissioning Draft Strategy for the Mental Health and Wellbeing of Adults of Working Age.

**71. 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 Economic Well-Being and for Environmental Well-Being.

**72. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SOCIAL WELL-BEING) - 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.

Councillor R J West delivered a brief update on the outcome of a recent meeting of the Corporate Plan Working Group. The draft Delivery Plan would go before the Executive Leaders Strategy Group in January 2013, seeking Executive Members' endorsement of their respective activities. Councillor S J Criswell then provided an outline of a meeting of the Social Value Working Group, where it was decided to focus on three key areas; namely the social, financial and health benefits of the Council's health and wellbeing activities.

Having regard to the annual monitoring report on Grant Aid, it was reported that the Panel would have sight of this at its meeting in November 2013.

In response to Members' reported concerns that the North Huntingdonshire pilot Local Joint Committee had yet to hold a public meeting, Councillor M C Oliver informed the Panel that he had attended an initial meeting in November 2012 and that a further informal meeting would be held in January 2013. Councillor M C Oliver undertook to update the Panel on developments as and when they arose.

Having queried the Council's involvement in the Cambridgeshire Future Transport Initiative, the Scrutiny and Review Manager confirmed that a representative from the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) had been appointed to participate in the County Council's arrangements for scrutinising the Initiative.

### **73. SCRUTINY**

The 129th Edition of the Decision Digest was received and noted.

Chairman

**NOTICE OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS INCLUDING THOSE TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE**

**Prepared by** Councillor J D Ablewhite  
**Date of Publication:** 19 December 2012  
**For Period:** 1<sup>st</sup> January to 30 April 2013

Membership of the Cabinet is as follows:-

Councillor J D Ablewhite	- Leader of the Council, with responsibility for Strategic Economic Development	3 Pettis Road St. Ives Huntingdon PE27 6SR  Tel: 01480 466941 E-mail: <a href="mailto:Jason.Ablewhite@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Jason.Ablewhite@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a>
Councillor N J Guyatt	- Deputy Leader of the Council with responsibility for Strategic Planning and Housing	6 Church Lane Stibbington Cambs PE8 6LP  Tel: 01780 782827 E-mail: <a href="mailto:Nick.Guyatt@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Nick.Guyatt@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a>
Councillor B S Chapman	- Executive Councillor for Customer Services	6 Kipling Place St. Neots Huntingdon PE19 7RG  Tel: 01480 212540 E-mail: <a href="mailto:Barry.Chapman@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Barry.Chapman@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a>
Councillor J A Gray	- Executive Councillor for Resources	Shufflewick Cottage Station Row Tilbrook PE28 OJY  Tel: 01480 861941 E-mail: <a href="mailto:Jonathan.Gray@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Jonathan.Gray@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a>
Councillor D M Tysoe	- Executive Councillor for Environment	Grove Cottage Maltings Lane Ellington Huntingdon PE28 0AA  Tel: 01480 388310 E-mail: <a href="mailto:Darren.Tysoe@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Darren.Tysoe@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a>

Councillor T D Sanderson	- Executive Councillor for Healthy and Active Communities	29 Burmoor Close Stukeley Meadows Huntingdon PE29 6GE Tel: (01480) 412135 E-mail: <a href="mailto:Tom.Sanderson@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Tom.Sanderson@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a>
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Notice is hereby given of:

- Key decisions that will be taken by the Cabinet (or other decision maker)
- Confidential or exempt executive decisions that will be taken in a meeting from which the public will be excluded (for whole or part).

A notice/agenda together with reports and supporting documents for each meeting will be published at least five working days before the date of the meeting. In order to enquire about the availability of documents and subject to any restrictions on their disclosure, copies may be requested by contacting Mrs Helen Taylor, Senior Democratic Services Officer on 01480 388008 or E-mail [Helen.Taylor@huntingdonshire.gov.uk](mailto:Helen.Taylor@huntingdonshire.gov.uk).

Agendas may be accessed electronically at [www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk](http://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk).

Formal notice is hereby given under The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 that, where indicated part of the meetings listed in this notice will be held in private because the agenda and reports for the meeting will contain confidential or exempt information under Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended) and that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it. See the relevant paragraphs below.

Any person who wishes to make representations to the decision maker about a decision which is to be made or wishes to object to an item being considered in private may do so by emailing [Legal&DemServDemocratic@huntingdonshire.gov.uk](mailto:Legal&DemServDemocratic@huntingdonshire.gov.uk) or by writing to the Senior Democratic Services Officer. If representations are received at least eight working days before the date of the meeting, they will be published with the agenda together with a statement of the District Council's response. Any representations received after this time will be verbally reported and considered at the meeting.

**Paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended) (Reason for the report to be considered in private)**

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the Financial and Business Affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information)
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations or contemplated consultations or negotiations in connection with any labour relations that are arising between the Authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of or office holders under the Authority
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings
6. Information which reveals that the Authority proposes:-
  - (a) To give under any announcement a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
  - (b) To make an Order or Direction under any enactment
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

Colin Meadowcroft  
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Huntingdonshire District Council  
Pathfinder House

St Mary's Street  
Huntingdon PE29 3TN.

Notes:- (i) Additions changes from the previous Forward Plan are annotated \*\*\*  
(ii) Part II confidential items which will be considered in private are annotated ## and shown in italic.

Subject/Matter for Decision	Decision/ recommendation to be made by	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private.	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Cambridgeshire Pooling Designation***	Cabinet	14 Jan 2013		Steve Couper, Head of Financial Services Tel No. 01480 388103 or email Steve.Couper@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		J A Gray	Economic Well-Being
Update on Housing Benefit Changes and Potential Impact on Huntingdonshire***	Cabinet	24 Jan 2013	None	Julia Barber, Head of Customer Services Tel No. 01480 388105 or email Julia.Barber@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		B S Chapman	Social Well-Being
Business Plan One Leisure - Quarterly Performance Reports##	Cabinet	24 Jan 2013	None	Simon Bell, General Manager, One Leisure Tel No. 01480 388049 or email Simon.Bell@huntingdonshire.gov.uk	Exempt under paragraph 4.	T D Sanderson	Economic Well-Being
Huntingdon Gym##	Cabinet	24 Jan 2013		Colin Meadowcroft, Head of Legal and Democratic Services Tel No. 01480 388021 or email Colin.Meadowcroft@huntingdonshire.gov.uk	Exempt under paragraph 3	J A Gray	Social Well-Being

Subject/Matter for Decision	Decision/ recommendation to be made by	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Revision of the Wind Power Supplementary Planning Document	Cabinet	24 Jan 2013		Paul Bland, Planning Service Manager (Policy) Tel No. 01480 388430 or email Paul.Bland@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		N J Guyatt	Environmental Well-Being
The Green Deal in Hunts***	Cabinet	14 Feb 2013		Chris Jablonski, Environment Team Leader Tel No. 01480 388368 or email Chris.Jablonski@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		D M Tysoe	Environmental Well-Being
Land for Sale at Earith##	Cabinet	14 Feb 2013		Chris Allen, Project and Assets Manager Tel No. 01480 388380 or email Chris.Allen@huntingdonshire.gov.uk	Exempt under paragraph 3	J A Gray	Economic Well-Being
Budget and MTP	Cabinet	14 Feb 2013	Draft MTP - previous year's budget report - various annexes	Steve Couper, Head of Financial Services Tel No. 01480 388103 or e-mail Steve.Couper@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		J A Gray	Economic Well-Being
Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators	Cabinet	14 Feb 2013	Previous year's Strategy	Steve Couper, Head of Financial Services Tel No. 01480 388103 or e-mail Steve.Couper@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		J A Gray	Economic Well-Being
Local Plan	Cabinet	21 Mar 2013	None	Paul Bland, Planning Service Manager (Policy) Tel No. 01480 388430 or email Paul.Bland@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		N J Guyatt	Environmental Well-Being

Subject/Matter for Decision	Decision/ recommendation to be made by	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Home Improvement Agency Shared Service - Annual Operating Service***	Cabinet	18 Apr 2013		Trish Reed, Housing Strategy Manager Tel No. 01480 388203 or email Trish.Reed@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		N J Guyatt	Social Well-Being

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17 DECEMBER 2012

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL  
(SOCIAL WELL-BEING)

8 JANUARY 2013

CABINET

24 JANUARY 2013

## HOUSING BENEFIT CHANGES AND THE POTENTIAL IMPACT ON HUNTINGDONSHIRE (Report by the Head of Customer Services)

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Government's Welfare Reform programme includes significant changes to the Housing Benefit system. The Panel has previously received information regarding the changes and the potential impact these were likely to have on households in Huntingdonshire (see appendix A). The Panel requested quarterly updates on the impact of these changes, in particular on homelessness, and these figures have been included later in this report.
- 1.2 Government policy is partly based on the belief that the Housing Benefit system has been driving private sector rent increases in recent years and so the Panel also requested information on whether private sector rents were adjusting in light of these welfare reforms. This is being monitored through the rents that Housing Benefit is paid against and a further report will be presented to the Economic Well Being Panel later this week on this subject. Members of this Panel have also been invited to attend.

### 2. IMPACT & TIMESCALES

- 2.1 The effects of the Government's Welfare Reform programme have been felt by Housing Benefit claimants since April 2011 when the Local Housing Allowance rates used to work out Housing Benefit entitlement were reduced. However, as existing tenants had 9 months protection, the effects were not felt until January 2012 onwards with the final cases losing their transitional protection in December 2012. Although some claimants have lost Housing Benefit of up to £70 per week, only a small number of the affected customers have contacted the Housing Benefit or Housing Advice & Options teams for advice. A proportion of these households will have made their own arrangements and be either making up the reduction in their Housing Benefit entitlement, have found cheaper accommodation or negotiated a lower rent with their landlord. The concern still remains those that have not taken up any of these options, or taken up the offer of advice from the council and are currently building up rent arrears on their home. This remains an unknown number.
- 2.2 Further changes will be implemented in April 2013 including the introduction of a benefit cap which will restrict the amount of benefit that a household can claim. The

cap will be £500 per week and covers all benefits, including Housing Benefit. The Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) has advised that there are 30 households in Huntingdonshire that will potentially be affected by the benefit cap if their circumstances do not change. Given the nature of this cap it is mainly affecting larger families, who the council may have a statutory duty to help if they subsequently became homeless. The DWP has written to these households to explain the changes and their reduced entitlement to the benefits they receive but, as yet, there has been no contact from the affected claimants.

- 2.3 For people living in privately rented accommodation, the rent used in the benefit calculation is based on the Local Housing Allowance (LHA). The LHA rates are set by the Valuation Office Agency and are based on rents charged locally. However, in April 2013, the LHA rates will increase based on the September 2012 CPI figure and for the following two years, they will be increased by 1%. This means that the rents used in the benefit calculation will move away from reflecting the local market rates.
- 2.4 A major change to the way that Housing Benefit is assessed for working age people living in social housing is also being introduced in April 2013. Up until now, people living in social housing will normally have had their Housing Benefit worked out using the full eligible rent regardless of the size of accommodation they live in. The forthcoming changes will mean that if a claimant is deemed to be living in a property too large for their needs, the rent used in the benefit calculation will be reduced by 14% if they under occupy by one bedroom or 25% if they under occupy by 2 or more bedrooms. The size criteria used will be the same as for people living in the private rented sector. It is estimated that around 1000 households in Huntingdonshire will be affected by this change.
- 2.5 Both the Benefits Section and the Housing Associations have been contacting people who will be affected by this change to advise them of the potential shortfall in their Housing Benefit from April and what choices they have to mitigate the shortfall.
- 2.6 In addition, Housing Services and Benefits are members of the Under Occupation Partnership Agreement along with a number of local housing providers. This group shares best practice on looking at ways of dealing with the effects of the under occupation changes and ensures that all partners are kept up to date on legislation and processes. Regular meetings are held with Luminus to discuss all aspects of the welfare reform changes so that we can take a joined up approach in communicating with Luminus tenants. Luminus have employed two people on a part-time basis to encourage people to move into appropriately sized accommodation.
- 2.7 Council Tax Benefit is being abolished from 1 April 2013 and is being replaced by a local Council Tax Support scheme. The final proposed scheme was presented to Council on 19 December 2012. In devising a scheme, HDC had to take account of a 10% cut in funding and protect pensioners from any reduction in the support awarded. The majority of working age claimants will see a reduction in the amount of help they get towards their Council Tax.
- 2.8 The position with housing advice and options work, together with homelessness and prevention work in the first half of 2012/13 was as follows:

- 59 households were prevented from becoming homeless in Q2, compared to 93 in Q2 last year. A total of 130 households prevented from becoming homeless in Q1 & Q2 compared to 160 households in the same period last year. The most successful prevention measure of helping households into private rented tenancies is diminishing.
- 60 households were accepted as homeless in Q2 compared to 38 in the same period last year. A total of 102 households have been accepted as homeless in Q1 & Q2 compared to 81 households in the same period last year. The causes of homelessness are recorded and we are seeing an increase in the number of households being evicted from private sector tenancies. This is a national and local trend. Locally this is not as a direct result of people falling into arrears but anecdotal evidence suggests it is due to landlords' reluctance to work with claimants on the benefit system or some landlords purely wishing to sell their properties.
- There were 86 households in temporary accommodation at the end of Q2 compared to 77 at the start.
- 68 Rent Deposit scheme applications were received in Q2 (compared to 85 in Q2 last year) and assisted 35 of these into private sector tenancies with the help of a loan or bond (compared to 43 in the same period last year).

### **3. RISKS**

- 3.1 Each of the welfare reforms outlined in this paper affects the income of those households impacted and as such has the potential to limit their ability to meet their monthly outgoings. The unknown factor is how many households will be forced into a position where they are unable to maintain essential outgoings such as rent and mortgage payments possibly leading to a threat of homelessness. The council has to date seen relatively few households made homeless as a direct result of affordability issues brought on by the welfare reforms. The main impact so far has been fewer privately rented properties available to Housing Benefit claimants resulting in a reduction in the number of successful homelessness preventions by helping people into private rentals. This has contributed to an increase in statutory homeless applications and the need to provide some of these households with temporary accommodation. It is likely that this risk will continue and may increase over the next year or so. An MTP bid (£150k) has been made for extra funds to cover the cost of homelessness.
- 3.2 Many households will be affected by more than one of the welfare reforms and so may see several reductions in their household income throughout the full welfare reform programme. Some of the welfare reforms may only recently have taken effect for households and as other welfare reforms are implemented (such as the reduction of Housing Benefit for working age households in under-occupied social rented housing and the introduction of the new Council Tax Support scheme) the cumulative effect is likely to reduce the ability of households to maintain their monthly outgoings. The full impact of these reforms particularly on homelessness may not be realised for some time as households over time begin to possibly suffer greater financial hardship.
- 3.3 A further impact on the council of reductions in households' income may be their ability to meet their Council Tax payments. The new Council Tax Support scheme

will require nearly all working age people to contribute to their Council Tax even when on out of work and low income or benefits. It will also mean that some people will be faced with bills for hard to collect debts and the percentage rate of Council Tax collection is likely to fall. We are increasing staff in Council Tax to attempt to recover as much as possible of this new debt. An MTP bid for £40k pa has been submitted.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 All claimants have been contacted to advise them of their personal changes although relatively small numbers of these households have taken up the offer of advice and help from the council. The issue remains that new claimants have faced problems in acquiring accommodation in the private rented sector, which has resulted in increased demands on the Housing Advice & Options service with limited opportunities in the private rented sector to help these households compared to previous years.
- 4.2 The next tranche of welfare reforms will further impact on the income and circumstances of benefit claimants. Preparatory work is under way to engage with partners, the voluntary sector and other groups to raise awareness of this and to help them to prepare for April 2013 and beyond.

#### **5. RECOMMENDATION**

- 5.1 The Panel is asked to note the contents of this report

**Contact Officer:** **Julia Barber**  
 **01480 388105**

**Appendix A**

<b>Date change implemented</b>	<b>Summary of change</b>	<b>HB impact</b>	<b>Housing impact</b>
April 2011	Local Housing Allowance limited to 30% instead of 50% (average rent amounts)	<p>From April to July 2012 there were 158 households that saw a reduction in their HB entitlement between £0.01 and £73.85 per week, with a total annual loss of £62k in HB payments.</p> <p>Between August and November there were a further 125 households who had a reduction of between £1.16 and £93.80 per week in their HB entitlement, with a total annual loss of £62k in HB payments.</p> <p>In December there will potentially be a further 28 households with a reduction of up to £21.92 per week in HB entitlement with a total annual loss of £6.5k</p> <p>(Note: The reduction in benefit for the cases above can also be due to changes in their income)</p>	<p>Throughout 2012 we have seen a reduction in the number of households able to access the private rented sector due to the reduced LHA rates resulting in fewer homelessness preventions.</p> <p>Relatively few of the households impacted by this change have sought advice from the council despite this being offered. Some may have considered the options open to them – either to find alternative more affordable housing, renegotiate rent levels with their landlord or try to maximise their income – without the need for help from the council.</p> <p>The number of households approaching the council for advice and help because of this change has been very low. The risk to the council is that those households that have only recently lost their transitional protection and not taken the appropriate action or sought advice may face eviction from their current tenancy once their rent arrears start to accrue. The number of households in this situation is not known.</p>
April 2011	Increase in Non-dependent deductions	<p>329 HB claims and 406 CTB claims are currently affected. The increase in annual HB deductions since 2010/11 is £186k and CTB is £35k.</p> <p>There has been little contact from customers affected by this change.</p>	<p>If shortfall is not made up households may fall into arrears. Parents may ask their grown up children (over 18) to leave the family home. Most will not be priority need, but may require advice on housing options</p> <p>The Housing Advice &amp; Options team has not seen an increase in customers because of this change.</p>
April 2011	Government to increase Discretionary Housing Payment funds to councils	Increase in DHP grant to £68,432 in 2012/13 (from £41,422). A further £10k budget is available to help with transitional	Households experiencing reductions in their HB entitlement as a result of these changes are encouraged to make a DHP application as part of our

Date change implemented	Summary of change	HB impact	Housing impact
	every year	<p>payments. However annual loss to claimants is predicted to be £370k, so not able to offset impact.</p> <p>There has been a 13% increase in demand compared to the same period last year. (186 awards totalling £49k have been made)</p>	homelessness prevention measures. DHP is only a short term option whilst the household consider other options such as moving to cheaper accommodation or increasing their income. The DHP system is therefore not a long term measure to resolve homelessness.
January 2012	Shared Accommodation Rate to be applied to single people under 35 (extended from those under 25)	<p>12 existing claims were impacted between April and August, 1 case &lt;£10, 1 case between £10-£20, 10 cases between £30-£40 per week. No further cases were identified between September and December.</p> <p>Since April 2012, 13 DHP's have been awarded to help people affected by this change.</p>	We have started to see a small number of the people affected by this change. There are limited options we can offer apart from advice and possible help through the Rent Deposit scheme to find a room in a shared house. There are relatively few Houses in Multiple Occupation offering shared housing in the district so options are limited.
April 2013	HB entitlement reduced for social rented tenants below pensionable age who are under-occupying their homes	<p>The rent figure used in the HB calculation will be reduced by a percentage based on whether the claimant is over accommodated by one or two bedrooms. The LHA bedroom entitlement rates will be used to assess the number of bedrooms that a household is entitled to. Where a household of working age exceeds this by one bedroom they will have a 14% reduction in the rent figure used in the benefit calculation. Where they exceed it by two or more bedrooms they will have a 25% reduction in the rent figure used.</p> <p>There are 966 households under occupying their homes of which 167 are by 2 bedrooms or more.</p>	<p>The review of the council's Lettings Policy, considered by Cabinet in December, incorporated the LHA bedroom entitlement rate as the 'bedroom standard' to be used in assessments and lettings from April 2013. The result will be a more crowded social rented stock but fewer tenancies where Housing Benefits will not cover the full rent charged.</p> <p>The reduction in Housing benefit entitlement for housing association tenants will potentially lead to higher levels of rent arrears with affected tenants who may ultimately face eviction if their rent is not paid.</p>

Date change implemented	Summary of change	HB impact	Housing impact
		<p>We contacted HB claimants in early December 2012 to let them know how they will be affected.</p> <p>We are continuing to work with housing providers so that they can also contact their tenants about their options.</p>	
April 2013	Local Housing Allowance rates will be uprated in line with CPI	<p>LHA rates have been frozen at the April 2012 level for the remainder of the financial year. From April 2013 the LHA rates will increase in line with the CPI rather than the RPI.</p> <p>We will start writing to all customers affected by this change in December 2012.</p>	If LHA rates don't keep pace with rent levels, over time this will reduce the proportion of private sector properties available to HB claimants.
April 2013	<p>£500 per week cap on benefits claimed. The aim of this is that people who aren't working shouldn't receive more income than the average person/household who is working. The cap has been set at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £500 per week for couples with or without children and lone parents</li> <li>• £350 per week for a single person with no children</li> </ul> <p>If the claimant's income exceeds this cap, their Housing Benefit will be reduced.</p>	<p>The DWP have identified households that may be affected by the cap and have written to them now with advice on how to avoid the cap. There are 30 claimants within the HDC area who may be affected; these are mainly large families living in a mixture of social and privately rented property. The potential loss in benefits ranges from £0.70 per week to £260 per week.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 households could lose £100+ per week</li> <li>• 8 households could lose between £50 and £100 per week</li> <li>• 3 households could lose between £40 and £50 per week</li> <li>• 4 households could lose between £20 and £30 per week</li> <li>• 4 households could lose between £10 and £20 per week</li> </ul>	<p>Existing tenants will be forced to vacate homes where they can no longer afford the rent once the cap is applied to their total benefit entitlement. They will potentially apply to the council as homeless as they are no longer able to afford their rent and the council may then have a duty to help with the rehousing of the household.</p> <p>Although this will affect relatively few households they are likely to be larger families who, if threatened with homelessness, may approach the council for further help with housing under the homelessness legislation. The key to avoiding this is the work that the DWP completes with these households so as to minimise the impact of the benefit cap on them.</p>

Date change implemented	Summary of change	HB impact	Housing impact
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7 households could lose less than £10 per week</li> </ul> <p>However, the full effect will not be felt until Universal Credit is introduced in 2013/14.</p>	
April 2013	Introduction of localised Council Tax Support to replace Council Tax Benefit	<p>This change will only affect the 4885 claimants of working age. The estimated loss of help towards paying Council Tax is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 416 claimants will lose between £0 and £1.99 per week</li> <li>• 3094 claimants will lose between £2 and £3.99 per week</li> <li>• 773 claimants will lose between £4 and £5.99 per week</li> <li>• 444 claimants will lose between £6 and £9.99 per week</li> <li>• 145 claimants will lose between £10 and £19.99 per week</li> <li>• 13 claimants will lose £20+ per week</li> </ul>	This is another change that will affect the amount of each household's income available to cover their rent payments, potentially leading to homelessness if households fall into arrears and face eviction.

\* The figures in this table may vary throughout the year if claimant's circumstances change prior to the welfare reform coming into effect.



**NOTIFICATION OF GRANT AID AWARDS FOR 2013-14 AND DETAILS OF INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS FOR ADVICE SERVICES (JAN – MARCH 2013)**  
(Report by Head of Environmental & Community Health Services)

**1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The main purpose of this report is to provide members with information about the decisions regarding the awards of Grant Aid budget; in relation to the bids received during October 2012. The report also provides Members with summary information relating to the interim arrangements for advice services (January to March 2013).

**2 SUMMARY OF DECISION FOR 2013-14 GRANT AWARDS**

- 2.1 Following full consideration of all the submissions received. Councillors Sanderson and Gray agreed that funding for three financial years commencing April 2013 be awarded to the following organisations:-

• Rural Cambs Citizens' Advice Bureau	£115,000
• Disability Information Service Huntingdonshire	£ 19,000
• Hunts Forum for Voluntary Organisations	£ 43,000
• Care Network	£ 10,000
• Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre	£ 37,000
• Huntingdon Shopmobility	£ 30,000

- 2.2 The letters making the offer of grant were dispatched to the successful organisations on 12 December 2012.

- 2.3 At the same meeting it was agreed that awards would not be made to the following organisations:-

- Ouse Valley Advice
- Bridge Money Advice / Counselling Service
- Life after Debt
- St Barnabas Community Learning Centre
- Cambridgeshire Search and Rescue

- 2.4 The letter advising those organisation who were unsuccessful in their bids were dispatched on 17 December 2012.

- 2.5 Members will be aware that the current 5-year arrangements for voluntary sector support including the arrangement with Huntingdonshire CAB was due to end in March 2012. In a development, separate from the natural end to the current 5-year arrangements, Huntingdonshire CAB decided to wind-up.

**3. DETAILS OF INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS FOR ADVICE SERVICES (Jan – Mar 2013)**

3.1 Huntingdonshire CAB had been providing Citizens' Advice Services across the district under the 5-year arrangement. The decision of Huntingdonshire CAB and the scheduled timing of the council's grant-award process meant that there were two distinct, but inter-dependent issues being resolved.

3.2 The offer to Rural Cambs Citizens Advice Bureau was on the basis of the bid they submitted for providing advices, including specialist debt-advice services to the residents of Huntingdonshire, from 1 April 2013. As the successful bidder, for the 2013-14 grant, they were the first choice to approach regarding provision of an interim advice-service. To expect another provider to set up, operate and close down within an 11/12 week period while offering a comprehensive service throughout is not realistic; by approaching Rural Cambs. CAB the set-up phase is likely to be equally challenging but the benefits can be sustained into the period of the new arrangement.

3.3 Rural Cambs.CAB has indicated that it would be prepared to offer an advice service in both St Neots and Huntingdon from January 2013. The costs arising and the grant support that would be necessary to make this possible have been negotiated. The support required can be provided by HDC from the unspent grant budget for 2012-13; there are sufficient funds.

3.4 Rural Cambs. CAB acknowledges that it will not be able to provide the full service from day 1 (3 January 2013). During this period they will be actively recruiting volunteers and appointing supervisors; temporarily, where vacancies exist. (They envisage they will be using available staff/volunteers previously based in Huntingdonshire. Longer term they indicate they will need to advertise and interview for positions, in accordance with their standard recruitment process). They plan an active recruitment campaign for volunteers. They will also be looking at the training needs for existing volunteers and arranging training plans in particular in relation to Welfare Benefit Reform. However during **January** they will also be offering services to the public:

St Mary's School, <b>St Neots</b> :	Face to face appointments -	2-days pw
Town Hall, <b>Huntingdon</b>	Face to face appointments -	2-days pw
	Drop in debt-advice clinic –	1 day pw
Telephone and email service	For at least	3 days pw

3.4 In **February**, in addition to the volunteer recruitment/development activities they intend to develop the service further. In addition to assessing the demand for appointments and client needs (so they can increase capacity, to meet those needs as far as possible within available resources); they intend to expand the service to:

St Mary's School, <b>St Neots</b> :	Face to face appointments -	2-days pw
Now also in <b>St Neots</b> :	<u>Drop in debt-advice clinic –</u>	<u>1 day pw</u>
Town Hall, <b>Huntingdon</b>	Face to face appointments -	2-days pw
	Drop in debt-advice clinic –	1 day pw
Telephone and email service	For at least	<u>4 days pw</u>

3.5 By March Rural Cambs. CAB plan to have a permanent solution to the issue of an operating-base in St Neots town centre. They expect to have reviewed the service; completed the training and support for new telephone gateway assessors and be ready to deliver the full service from 1 April 2013.

#### 4. ARRANGEMENTS FOR ADVICE SERVICES 2013-14

4.1 From 1 April 2013 the full Rural Cambs. CAB service is planned to be:

Face-to face:

**St Neots** (Venue TBC)- 3 days per week  
(Mon, Tues and Weds) - 9:30 am to 4:00 pm  
**Huntingdon** (Huntingdon Town Hall) - 4 days a week  
(Mon, Tues, Thurs and Fri)– 9:30 am to 4:00 pm

Outreach appointments initially for 3 hours per week rotating between:

**St Ives** Town Hall  
**Ramsey** Community Information Centre and  
**Yaxley** Community Information Centre

Supplementary access:

Telephone access: Mon-Fri 9:30 to 4:00 – telephone number TBC  
E-mail access – (available 26 hrs pw) e-address TBC  
24/7 on-line access [www.ruralcambscab.org.uk](http://www.ruralcambscab.org.uk) (already available)

#### 5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The grant-budget for 2013-14 has now been allocated.

5.2 An interim arrangement has been made to sustain provision of advice to residents of Huntingdonshire until the beginning of the new financial year; to fill the gap left by the premature loss of service from Huntingdonshire CAB. There are sufficient funds in the 2012-13 'grant' budget for HDC to support Rural Cambs. Citizens' Advice Bureau.

#### 6. RECOMMENDATION

6.1 Members are requested to note the content of this report.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Grant Aid Submissions Received October 2012

Cabinet report,	19 January 2012:	Voluntary Sector Review (Indicative Funding)
Cabinet report,	19 July 2012:	Voluntary Sector Funding 2013/14 Onwards
Member report	21 November 2012	Consideration Of Grant Aid Applications - Those received for 2013 allocation
Decision Notice	22 November 2012	

#### Contact Officers:

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**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANELS**  
**(SOCIAL WELL-BEING)**  
**(ECONOMIC WELL-BEING)**  
**(ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING)**

**8 JANUARY 2013**  
**10 JANUARY 2013**  
**15 JANUARY 2013**

**WORK PLAN STUDIES**  
**(Report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services)**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of studies being undertaken by the other Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

**2. STUDIES**

2.1 The Council has a duty to improve the social, environmental and economic well-being of the District. This gives the Overview and Scrutiny Panels a wide remit to examine any issues that affect the District by conducting in-depth studies.

2.2 Studies are allocated according to the Overview and Scrutiny remits. Details of ongoing studies being undertaken by the two other Panels are set out in the attached Appendix.

2.3 Members are reminded that if they have a specific interest in any study area which is not being considered by their Panel there are opportunities for involvement in all the studies being undertaken.

**3. RECOMMENDATION**

3.1 The Panel is requested to note the progress of the studies selected.

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Minutes and Reports from previous meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

**Contact Officers: Miss H Ali, Democratic Services Officer**  
**01480 388006**

**Mrs C Bulman, Democratic Services Officer**  
**01480 388234**

**ONGOING STUDIES**

STUDY	OBJECTIVES	PANEL	STATUS	TYPE
Leisure Centre Financial Performance and Employment Structure	To consider the future business model for “One Leisure” and the development of a methodology for the quantification of Social Value.	Economic Well-Being and Social Well-Being	<p>Working Group met on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2012. Agreed to split into two sub groups to investigate each area.</p> <p>Sub-Group looking at the Social Methodology will focus on three key areas; namely social, health and financial benefits of the Council’s activities.</p> <p>It has been agreed that the review of the business model will be put on hold, pending the completion of the Business Plan for the Service. The Business Plan will be considered by the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) in January. Members of the Social Well-Being Panel will be invited to attend.</p>	Joint Working Group
A14 improvements.	To review the implications to the local economy of the decision not to proceed with the A14 improvements.	Economic Well-Being	The Panel has requested a presentation on developments relating to the A14 for all Members of the Council at an appropriate time. An update will be presented to the full	Whole Panel Study.

			<p>Council meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2012.</p> <p>Updates on recent developments to continue to be provided by email.</p>	
Tree Strategy	To form a strategy in conjunction with the Tree Officers for the retention and planting of trees.	Environmental Well-Being	Work is yet to commence on the Draft Tree Strategy. Owing to resource constraints within the Planning Department alternative ways of finalising the Tree Strategy are being considered.	Working Group.
Land Use for Agricultural Purposes in the Context of Planning Policies and its Contribution to the Local Economy.	To review the lack of promotion and protection of land for this purpose.	Environmental Well-Being	The final report of the Working Group was considered at the Panel's November meeting. The report's recommendations have been endorsed by the Cabinet.	Working Group.
Rural Transport	To review the provision of transportation in rural areas.	Environmental Well-Being	Transport for Cambridgeshire report received in July 2011. Comments conveyed to Cabinet. Final report expected in due course.	To be determined.
Maintenance of Water Courses	To receive a presentation on the maintenance arrangements in place for Water Courses within the District.	Environmental Well-Being	Following consideration of the St Neots Surface Water Management Plan and discussions on widespread drainage problems within	Working Group

			<p>the District, a working group was convened to engage with Anglian Water in order to establish their general powers, responsibilities and the limitations on its ability to prevent flooding.</p> <p>Meetings have been held with representatives from Anglian Water and the Environment Agency. The Working Group has produced a report on its findings but is awaiting the outcome of negotiations between Anglian Water and the County Council on drainage in Yaxley.</p>	
District Council Support Services	To review the services provided by the District Councils Document Centre to form a view on its efficiency and cost effectiveness.	Economic Well-Being	<p>Working Group has formed two sub groups to consider:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) the financial cost of the service; and</li> <li>b) the operation of the service</li> </ul> <p>The Working Group met on 14<sup>th</sup> November. A summary of their findings has now been compiled.</p>	Working Group
Design Principles for Future Developments	To examine issues that have arisen at Loves Farm, St Neots and to	Environmental Well-Being	The Working Group has produced a report detailing its findings to date. The	Working Group.



	make recommendations to inform future developments.		Working Group will now focus on detailed aspects of the design guide with the Council's Urban Design, Trees and Landscape Team Leader. This is expected to be available early February 2013.	
Economic Development	To be determined.	Economic Well-Being	<p>The findings from the Local Economic Assessment were presented to the Panel in November.</p> <p>The Panel will consider the new Local Economy Strategy at a meeting in the Spring.</p>	Whole Panel.
Corporate Plan	To assist the Corporate Office with the development of a new Corporate Plan.	All O&S Panels	Executive Leader's Strategy Group to consider the Delivery Plan on 14th January 2013 with a view to taking responsibility for the actions contained therein. A programme of bi-monthly meetings of the Working Group will be arranged over the course of the next year with a view to holding Executive Members to account.	Working Group
Fraud Prevention	To consider the implications from forthcoming changes to	Economic Well-Being	The Corporate Governance Panel has agreed to establish a Working Group	To be determined.

	the Housing Benefits system.		to consider fraud risks, current and future approaches and single fraud issues. Their report will be considered by the Panel at their meeting in January.	
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	To consider the implications of planning social housing requirements on Community Infrastructure Levy income and the housing waiting list.	Economic Well-Being	Managing Director (Communities, Partnerships & Projects) to discuss with Councillor M F Shellens directly.	To be determined.
Waste Collection	To identify options for improving the Council's waste collection and recycling arrangements and for enhancing public satisfaction with the service.	Environmental Well-Being	<p>The Working Group has decided to focus on how best to engage with residents as to what should be placed in which bin. The Group may go on to study waste collection procedures in more detail, this is dependent on the work of RECAP.</p> <p>The Panel expressed its support for the use of wheelie bin stickers to convey messages with community benefits, such as speed restrictions. Cllr I C Bates will make contact with Hilton Parish Council to determine the outcome of the Speedwatch pilot initiative undertaken in the village.</p>	Working Group

Council Borrowing	Agreed to establish a working group to develop an understanding of the District Council's approach to borrowing.	Economic Well-Being.	First meeting held on 17 <sup>th</sup> October 2012. The Group discussed various aspects of general approaches to borrowing and have asked for a report on a number of matters relating to the Council's borrowing. A further meeting was held on 19 <sup>th</sup> December 2012 and a report will be prepared for the Panel's Informal Meeting in late January.	Working Group.
Budget Savings	To identify possible Budgetary Savings	Economic Well-Being	An Informal Meeting of the Panel was held on Thursday 29 <sup>th</sup> November 2012. A number of recommendations were subsequently presented to the Executive Leaders Strategy Group.	Whole Panel
Green Waste and Energy Generation	To consider what opportunities the Council might have in terms of generating energy from green waste.	Environmental Well-Being	Scoping report on green waste and energy generation requested for submission to a future meeting. Request submitted to the Head of Environmental Management.	To be determined.
The Capital Budget	To examine the Council's Capital Budget.	Economic Well-Being	An Informal Meeting has been arranged for 30 <sup>th</sup> January.	Whole Panel.

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Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date for Future Action
<p><b>5/04/11 &amp; 2/10/12</b></p> <p><b>6/11/12</b></p> <p><b>4/12/12</b></p>	<p><b><u>Management of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital</u></b></p> <p>With effect from 1st February 2012, Circle took over the management of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital. Representatives of Circle and Hinchingsbrooke attended the Panel's meeting to deliver the Hospital's Business Plan. Agreed to come back to report on progress against the Business Plan in the future.</p> <p>A meeting between relevant County Members and the Panel was held on 5th November 2012 to share information and issues relating to services at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital. A report to this effect was tabled to Members at the meeting.</p> <p>Presentation received from Mrs S Shuttleworth, representative of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group on the Group's role in monitoring the financial and operational performance of the Hospital. A Joint Working Group with the County Council's Cambridgeshire Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee was established comprising Councillors S J Criswell, P Kadewere, M C Oliver and R J West together with Mr R Coxhead. The Working Group will receive regular updates on the Hospital.</p>	<p>Invitation extended to Circle to attend the Panel's March 2013 meeting – awaiting confirmation.</p> <p>The Working Group has been invited to attend a meeting of the Cambridgeshire Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5th February 2013 to consider issues surrounding the Hospital further.</p>		<p><b>5/03/13</b></p>

Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date for Future Action
<p><b>2/10/12 &amp; 6/11/12</b></p> <p><b>4/12/12</b></p>	<p><b><u>Delivery of Advisory Services Within the District</u></b></p> <p>Executive Leader addressed the Panel on the announcement by Huntingdonshire CAB to go into voluntary liquidisation. The situation is being managed but the Panel is concerned over the implications of the announcement to residents of the District and its effect on the Council. Further update received in November.</p> <p>At its December meeting, it was agreed that the former Voluntary Sector Working Group, comprising Councillors Mrs P A Jordan and R J West, together with Mrs M Nicholas, would meet with Officers in September and March each year to review the grant agreements established under the Council's new voluntary sector funding arrangements.</p>	<p>Panel requested to be kept informed of recent developments.</p>	<p>This item appears elsewhere on the Agenda.</p>	<p><b>8/01/13</b></p>
<p><b>04/09/12</b></p>	<p><b><u>Grant Aid</u></b></p> <p>Annual Report on organisations supported by grants through Service Level Agreements received and noted by the Panel. Requested future reports under the new grants system to include evidence of need and demand for voluntary services.</p>		<p>Next monitoring report expected November 2013.</p>	<p><b>5/11/12</b></p>
<p><b>16/05/12</b></p>	<p><b><u>Corporate Plan</u></b></p> <p>Councillors S J Criswell and R J West appointed to Corporate Plan Working Group.</p>			

Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date for Future Action
7/06/11	The Panel expressed their wish for continued involvement by overview and scrutiny in monitoring the performance of the new Council Plan.	Meetings of the Corporate Plan Working Group held on 1st and 28th August 2012. Draft considered by Executive Leaders Strategy Group on 10th September 2012.	The Executive Leaders Strategy Group will consider the Delivery Plan at their meeting on 7 <sup>th</sup> January 2013 with a view to taking responsibility for the actions contained therein. A programme of bi-monthly meetings of the Corporate Plan Working Group will be arranged over the course of the next year with a view to holding Executive Members to account.	
6/03/12	<p><b><u>Consultation Processes</u></b></p> <p>Update received on a previous study undertaken by the Panel. Panel to partake in the review of the Consultation and Engagement Strategy.</p>	Panel to appoint Members to undertake this work.		
12/06/12	Councillors Mrs P A Jordan, P Kadewere, J W G Pethard and R J West appointed on to the Consultation Processes Working Group.	Meeting of the Working Group held on 5th September 2012.	Strategy and Guidance in the process of being reviewed. Draft expected to be ready for consideration by the Working Group in January 2013. Meeting of the Working Group to be held on 23rd January 2013.	

Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date for Future Action
<p><b>03/01/12</b></p> <p><b>03/07/12</b></p>	<p><b><u>Social Value</u></b></p> <p>This study emerged following completion of a joint study with the Economic Well-Being Panel on One Leisure. Working Group tasked with the development of a methodology for the quantification of Social Value.</p> <p>Councillors S J Criswell and R J West appointed to the Social Value Sub-Group, together with Mr R Coxhead. Meeting held on 2nd August and 23rd November 2012.</p>	<p>Working Group has agreed to focus on three key areas; namely the social, health and financial benefits of social value.</p>		
<p><b>6/11/12</b></p>	<p><b><u>Potential Merger Between Cambridgeshire and Suffolk Fire and Rescue Services</u></b></p> <p>Councillor F Brown, Chairman of the Fire Authority and Mr M Warren, Director of Resources and Treasurer to the Fire Authority delivered a presentation on the current consultation being undertaken by Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service on proposals for further collaboration up to a full merger between Cambridgeshire and Suffolk Fire and Rescue Services. Agreed that a draft response would be presented to the Panel at its December 2012 meeting for endorsement given that the consultation closes on 14th January 2013.</p>			



Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date for Future Action
4/12/12	Panel endorsed the content of a response for submission to the Fire Authority.			
1/11/11  7/02/12	<p><b><u>Future of the CCTV Service</u></b></p> <p>Update received on the options for the future operation of the CCTV service. Efforts made to reduce the cost of the service to the Council was noted by the Panel.</p> <p>Further update delivered to the Panel following discussions with Town Councils. Panel requested for a further report on service changes in 2012/13 to be submitted to a future meeting.</p>	Request submitted to the Head of Operations.	Report expected at Panel's February 2013 meeting.	<b>5/02/13</b>
03/07/12 & 04/09/12	<p><b><u>Review of Neighbourhood Forums In Huntingdonshire</u></b></p> <p>At the request of the Cabinet, the Panel completed a study reviewing the Neighbourhood Forums in Huntingdonshire. Cabinet agreed that a pilot scheme will be trialled in the Norman Cross County Division for a twelve month period with the existing Neighbourhood Forums being subject to urgent review by the Deputy Executive Leader. Panel has been requested to undertake a review of the Norman Cross Pilot during its twelve months of operation.</p>	Deputy Leader met with the existing Neighbourhood Forum Chairmen on 1st November 2012. Pilot meeting held on 7th November 2012. A further informal meeting is expected to be held in January 2013.		

Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date for Future Action
12/06/12	<p><b><u>Equality Framework for Local Government – Peer Assessment</u></b></p> <p>Noted the recent accreditation achieved by the Council as an “Achieving” authority under the Equality Framework for Local Government. Councillors Mrs P A Jordan, P Kadewere and R J West appointed on to a Working Group to review the action plan arising from the assessment.</p>	Meeting of the Working Group held on 29th August 2012.	Councillor Mrs P A Jordan has agreed to attend the Equality Framework Steering Group on behalf of the Working Group. Action Plan has recently been updated and will be subject to further review by the Working Group at its next meeting scheduled to be held on 23rd January 2012.	
7/06/11  6/12/11 & 12/06/12	<p><b><u>Housing Benefit Changes and the Potential Impact on Huntingdonshire</u></b></p> <p>Requested a background report to be provided on the emerging issue of homelessness arising as a result of changes to the Housing Benefit system.</p> <p>Report considered by the Panel. Further report on the wider housing policy implications arising from the Government’s Welfare Reform Bill submitted to the Panel in June 2012. Quarterly updates will continue to be provided.</p>	Request submitted to the Head of Customer Services.	Members of the Economic Well-Being Panel will be invited to attend for this item. Next quarterly report anticipated January 2013. This item appears elsewhere on the Agenda.	8/01/13



Panel Date	Decision	Action	Response	Date for Future Action
05/10/10	<p>as part of its annual scrutiny of the Partnership.</p> <p><b>Children and Young People</b></p> <p>Details of the thematic group's outcomes and objectives have been received together with the latest report of the group, outlining its terms of reference, membership and current matters being discussed.</p>	<p>Invitation extended to the Lead Officer of the thematic group.</p>		TBC
7/02/12	<p><b>Health and Well-Being</b></p> <p>Background information received on the thematic group's outcomes, terms of reference, membership and Action Plan.</p>	<p>Invitation to be extended to representatives of the Group.</p>		05/03/12

## Decision Digest

Edition 130

**Monthly summary of the decisions taken at meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny and other Panels for the period 26th November to 21st December 2012.**

### **REVIEW OF EMPLOYEE CONSULTATION INFORMATION ARRANGEMENTS**

Following a review of arrangements for consulting and informing staff on employment and service matters and for making employment related decisions the Employment Panel has expressed its support for proposals which will streamline the way in which these matters are currently dealt with.

The new arrangements will enable the Council to:-

- ◆ reflect best practice in governance arrangements and in setting Senior Management salaries;
- ◆ avoid the unnecessary duplication of business between Forums;
- ◆ clarify the responsibilities of Managers and clearly establish how they are to be held accountable;
- ◆ enhance the role of the staff counsel.

It has also been suggested that employment related matters be delegated at some stage to the Head of the Paid Service to enable these decisions to be consulted on and ratified locally and more expediently.

The Panel has been assured that the intention to establish an Employment Scrutiny Panel will not diminish the role of Members and will

offer an opportunity both to scrutinise the way in which decisions are reached and enable policy matters to be considered in more detail. The terms and conditions of Senior Officers will continue to be the responsibility of the Senior Officers' Panel whose terms of reference will be widened to consider the salaries for starting posts at Head of Service level and above.

As it is the role of the Corporate Governance Panel to consider proposed changes to the Constitution, the Panel also has had the opportunity to consider these proposals. Whilst indicating their support for them, in principle, and raising no objection to the suggested changes to ELAG and the Senior Officers' Panel, the Panel expressed concern at the extent of the authority to be delegated to the Head of Paid Service for employment issues and was of the view that to avoid confusion with the mechanisms for scrutiny that there was no sound reason to change the name of the Employment Panel. With this in mind, the Panel deferred the proposals to their next meeting to enable the terms of reference of the new Panel to be clarified and the precise parameters of the authority to be delegated to the Head of Paid Service to be better defined.

### **EMPLOYMENT REPORT**

The Employment Panel has received a quarterly report on the Human Resource matters impacting on the

performance of the organisation. The report included the latest position and trends relating to:-

- ◆ employee numbers;
- ◆ salary costs;
- ◆ employee turnover;
- ◆ retention of new starters;
- ◆ sickness absence reporting; and
- ◆ the Human Resources caseload.

In terms of tackling sickness absence, the Panel has noted that a consistent use of return to work interviews and self-certification for all periods of absence will be introduced with effect from 1st January 2013.

A review of the Sickness Absence Policy and Procedures will be presented to the Panel's next meeting in February.

#### **QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR HR, PAYROLL AND ORGANISATIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

The Employment Panel has considered the performance of LGSS Human Resources, Payroll and Organisational Workforce Development Services across the key service measures put in place at the start of the contract.

LGSS performance will be measured in three areas, namely:-

- ◆ HR Strategic and Advisory;
- ◆ Recruitment and Payroll;
- ◆ Organisational Workforce Development.

It is the intention to agree specific targets after the first full year of operation.

Having noted that performance standards had been achieved to-date and the priorities identified for the next quarter, the Panel were pleased to note

that, overall, the transition to LGSS had largely been a success and had provided benefits that had not originally been foreseen in terms of access to wider projects and expertise within their organisation. Further reports will be provided on a quarterly basis.

#### **SAFEGUARDING**

In order to comply with recent changes in legislation, both the Cabinet and Employment Panel have endorsed the a new policy and procedures for safeguarding vulnerable people, including children from abuse.

The Policy will apply to all District Council employees and is intended to promote the safety of those using Council services whilst at the same time protect employees and Councillors from false allegations.

As further changes will be required shortly and on a regular basis, the Panel has authorised the Chief Officers' Management Team and the Lead Safeguarding Officer to make the necessary adjustments to the Policy during the period until it is next reviewed in June 2014.

The Panel has also recommended that an implementation timetable and monitoring system should be developed to indicate the progress which has been made.

#### **PAY REVIEW PROJECT**

The Panel has received an update on the progress being made by the Council's Pay Review Project. Phase 2 of the Job Evaluation work stream has now begun and 57 posts (which equates to 208 staff) within the organisation have been evaluated. Phase 3 is expected to commence in December and be completed by the end of March 2013.

As part of the Job Evaluation process, work is also being undertaken to establish 'Job Families' for business support staff. A number of staff focus groups have been arranged for this purpose and it was anticipated that the criteria for these would be approved by the Pay Review Project Board and Employment Panel in February.

The outcome of Phase 2 of the job evaluation work stream will enable work to start on the modelling of the new District Council pay structure early in the New Year, for implementation in October 2013.

### **NHS CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH: FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT**

A representative of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group attended the Overview and Scrutiny Panel's (Social Well-Being) meeting to discuss concerns relating to the financial and operational performance of Hinchingbrooke Hospital. Areas of current concern include the recent norovirus outbreak and its impact upon the availability of bed space without resulting in delays in waiting times within the Accident and Emergency Department, performance against targets for treating cancer patients and the financial deficit expected at the end of the 2012/13 financial year.

Regular reports will continue to be provided on the Hospital. Councillors S J Criswell, P Kadewere, M Oliver and R J West, together with Mr R Coxhead, were appointed to a Joint Working Group with representatives of the County Council's Cambridgeshire Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee to pursue these investigations further.

### **HUNTINGDONSHIRE CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU (CAB)**

An update was delivered to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) on recent developments relating to the CAB and the provision of advisory services in the District.

Rural Cambs CAB were announced as the successful bidders. A four day service in Huntingdon and a three day service in St Neots will be provided together with debt advisory services at both locations one day each week. Three hour outreach sessions will also be made available in Yaxley, St Neots and St Ives on a rotation basis with email, telephone and web advisory services also being provided alongside front line services.

Whilst there was concern over the process adopted to determine applications received under the new voluntary sector funding arrangements, assurances were delivered that due process was followed.

The Voluntary Sector Working Group, previously established by the Panel, will take part in regular review meetings with the successful bidder and the Executive Councillor for Healthy and Active Communities to monitor the performance of the service.

### **COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT FROM 1ST APRIL 2013**

Both the Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well Being) have considered a proposal to adopt a new local Council Tax Support scheme for the District to supersede the current national Council Tax Benefit scheme on 1st April 2013.

The impact of the scheme upon Town and Parish precepts is dependent upon a Government announcement expected on 13th December. Town and Parishes

have been advised to defer setting their precepts until this announcement is made. A report outlining the impact of this process on Town and Parish Councils will be made available to Members in February 2013.

Other matters discussed include the group's who will no longer be affected by the new scheme and the recommendation contained within the Equality Impact Assessment.

Having been reminded that the scheme was subject to consultation over the summer, the Cabinet has recommended its approval to Council.

### **POTENTIAL MERGER BETWEEN CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND SUFFOLK FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES**

Further to their last meeting, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) has endorsed the content of a response to the current consultation being undertaken on proposals for further collaboration up to a full merger between Cambridgeshire and Suffolk Fire and Rescue Services.

### **DISPOSAL OF LAND, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON**

The Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) has considered the details of an offer for the land fronting St Mary's Street in Huntingdon and whether this should be accepted by the Council.

Given that a significant upturn in the commercial property market is unlikely in the near term (planning permission for residential development has elapsed) the Panel is of the view that the Managing Director (Communities, Partnerships and Projects), after consultation with the Executive Member, should be authorised to accept an offer from the interested party. The Panel has made a

recommendation on the terms that should be negotiated and which would be acceptable.

Subsequently, the sale has been considered by the Cabinet and in noting the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel, Executive Councillors have authorised the Managing Director (Communities, Partnerships and Projects), to approve the terms for the sale of the land.

### **TREASURY MANAGEMENT – REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE: 6 MONTHLY REVIEW**

In order to fulfil its role of overseeing the management of the Council's financial investments and borrowing, the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) has reviewed the performance of the Council's Investments for the period 1st April to 30th September 2012. The Panel is of the view that the Cabinet should recommend the Council to note the contents of the report and approve the revised targets for interest rates exposure.

Subsequently the Cabinet has approved the contents of the report and the merging of the indicators.

### **UPDATE 2013/14 BUDGET & MTP**

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) has considered an update on the 2013/14 Budget and MTP. The Panel has previously held informal discussions on the Council's financial position. The Chairman has informed Members that he has advised the Cabinet of the options considered and recommendations that have been made. The Panel is reassured that the Cabinet is developing its own range of options for savings, many of which are similar to those identified by the Panel. The Panel looks forward to reviewing the Cabinet's plans in due course and



to discussing the way information is presented.

The Panel has discussed the report by the Head of Financial Services in detail. Members are generally of the view that the Council should seek to effect what savings it can make rather than run down reserves. In order to establish a complete picture, information on the savings that have been achieved to date has been requested. It is further felt that Members should be provided with ongoing monitoring data on progress against savings targets. At the same time, it is stressed that there is a need to protect services to customers.

The Panel has discussed the consequences of not pooling business rates. Further work is to be undertaken before a decision is taken for next year. If it is decided not to proceed, it will be possible to pool business rates in future years.

Members have discussed predictions for future housing completions, the procurement of energy and projected borrowing trends. A Working Group currently is looking at the Council's policies and approach to the latter. Particular emphasis has been placed on the assumptions made for the pay award and performance pay. While the view has been expressed that performance pay should only be awarded for better than expected performance and that no provision should be made for it in the budget, the Executive Councillor for Resources has indicated that there should be a performance related element in employees' pay. Attention has also been drawn to the increase in income as a result of the rise in the population level of the District.

At the conclusion of its deliberations the Panel has resolved to ask the Cabinet to examine what additional savings can be made bearing in mind the need to

maintain those services that impact on the community whilst preserving if possible the Council's reserves.

### **CHARGING FOR A SECOND GREEN BIN – CALL IN**

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) has called in the Cabinet's decision on charging for a second green bin on the grounds that their decision is "ambiguous" and "unclear" and that a formal assessment should be made of the environmental impacts of the proposals.

It was explained that the scheme will only proceed if savings cannot be identified from elsewhere within the Council. The Cabinet is currently reviewing a package of other savings measures, which will be decided upon no later than April 2013. It is for this reason that the Panel feel that the "in principle" decision to introduce charging is premature. The Panel has therefore referred the matter back to the Cabinet for further consideration, requesting the Executive to note the report and to consider the proposal to charge for collecting second green bins during its deliberations on all the Council's options for improving its financial position.

Subsequently, the Cabinet has considered the comments of the Panel and has reiterated that the proposal will be considered with all the Council's options for saving measures as part of the Medium Term Plan.

### **ROUND RESCHEDULING**

An update on round rescheduling for refuse, recycling and garden waste collection services was reported to Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being). The review intends to provide a more effective and efficient service, whilst taking into account property growth

levels within the District and providing an opportunity for the Council to reiterate some of its key waste and recycling messages to its residents. Members have welcomed the Communications Plan developed to publicise the changes which will go live on 25th February 2013.

### **CARBON MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE**

The Council's progress towards the implementation of the Carbon Management Plan was noted by the both the Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being). The Council is on target to achieve a 30% reduction in CO2 emission from the Council's estate by 2013/14. To date, a 20% reduction has been achieved. A saving of £300,000 has been realised and a further saving of £700,000 is expected to be made by 2013/14. Members have congratulated the Head of Environmental Management and his staff for the valuable contributions they have made in achieving the carbon reduction.

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE ACT 1988 – PUBLICATION OF RURAL SETTLEMENT LIST**

A rural settlement list for Huntingdonshire, which identifies the boundary of any settlement with no more than 3,000 residents has been approved by the Cabinet. The list is used to grant rural rate relief for local services such as post offices, village shops, public houses and petrol filling stations.

### **REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S LETTINGS POLICY**

A new Lettings Policy has been endorsed by the Cabinet. The Policy is a requirement of the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Localism Act 2011 and sets out how the Council, in partnership

with Registered Providers will allocate their properties through the "Home Link Choice Based Lettings Scheme".

### **THE TECHNICAL REFORM OF COUNCIL TAX**

The Cabinet has received an update on the Government's proposals to reform Council Tax from 1st April 2013 which will enable the Council to use certain discretionary powers.

Executive Councillors have reviewed proposals for a number of changes to Council Tax discounts and exemptions, which will generate extra income for the Council and will be used to reduce the impact on the Council of forthcoming changes to Council Tax Support. Having authorised the Head of Customer Services to calculate and award discounts under the Scheme, the Cabinet has agreed to the following changes to the Council Tax Policy:-

- unoccupied and unfurnished (Class C) properties be granted 100% discount for 1 month and then 0% thereafter;
- second home discount be reduced to 0%;
- uninhabitable properties (Class A) be granted 100% discount for a maximum of 12 months;
- empty homes premium be levied after two years at 50% in addition to the 100% charge currently made;
- monthly instalments continue to be due on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of each month but Managers be permitted to include an additional late instalment

date purely as an incentive for those opting to pay by direct debit.

### RISK MANAGEMENT

The Cabinet has approved the actions proposed to deal with an emerging risk relating to affordable housing and homelessness.

The Corporate Governance Panel has undertaken its annual review of the Risk Management Strategy and has concluded that the authority has robust risk management policies in place to support the Council's annual governance and statutory reporting processes. The Panel is also satisfied that there should be no change to the Council's risk appetite either in general terms or in respect of health & safety.

### CORPORATE BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANNING – ANNUAL REPORT 2012

The Corporate Governance Panel has considered progress made towards the preparation of a new Business Continuity Plan and Business Continuity Management System and has been assured that the arrangements now in place are sufficiently robust to enable the Council to respond to 'notable' incidents should they occur. More importantly there is now sufficient momentum in the process to ensure that the Plan continues to evolve and improve over time. The Panel will continue to monitor the arrangements and will receive the next report on progress in 12 months time.

### FRAUD INVESTIGATION

A report on the activities of the Fraud Team, the potential for fraud across the Council's service and the planned response to risk particularly following the introduction of a Single Fraud

Investigation Service (SFIS) in 2015 has been considered by the Corporate Governance Panel. Given the potential income which could be derived, the Panel has agreed with a suggestion that new work streams should be developed to uncover fraudulent activity and non welfare fraud areas further investigated. This additional workload will be managed by transferring a proportion of the welfare fraud tasks to the Department of Work & Pensions from 2013 and allow the Team to take advantage of Government funding which is available at the moment to develop a new Fraud Service. Given the importance of this work, the Panel has asked that their Fraud Working Group should continue to meet and report regularly to the Panel.

### REVIEW OF HOUSING BENEFIT FRAUD INVESTIGATION ACTIVITY & THE COUNCIL'S WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Having conducted its annual review of the Whistleblowing Policy, the Corporate Governance Panel has concluded that no changes are required to either the policy or guidance. However, the Panel considered it essential to continue to publicise, cost effectively, the opportunity that existed to report, without fear, any potential fraud or act which might endanger health and safety or mistreatment or abuse of customers. Having also received a report on the work undertaken by the Benefits Fraud Investigation Team in 2011/12, the Panel thought that the subject would be of interest to all Members and therefore requested that arrangements be made for a Seminar on the subject in the new year.

### FINAL AUDITORS REPORTS ON THE 2011/12 ACCOUNTS AND ANNUAL AUDIT LETTERS 2010/11 AND 2011/12

The report of the Auditor on the 2011/12 statement of accounts and the content of an Action Plan dealing with recommendations arising there from has been approved by the Corporate Governance Panel. Most of the actions required are routine but the two particular items drawn to the Panel's attention relating to the valuation of inventories and provision for bad debt should not prevent closure of the 2012/13 accounts to the required timescale. The Panel also received the Annual Audit letters from the Council's external auditors for the 2010/11 and 2011/12 audits.

### **PROVIDING ASSURANCE FOR THE ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT**

The Corporate Governance Panel has indicated its support for the introduction of an assurance mapping process which will act as a framework against which the Panel can check whether internal controls are operating effectively and objectives set are being achieved. The assurance map will plan for and receive assurance on key areas over the year. The Annual Governance Statement will also be simplified to try and make it a more meaningful document for both Members and the public.

### **INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE AND PLANNING**

The content of both the internal audit computer plan for the period to March 2014 and amendments to the general audit plan (relating to the 2010/11 final accounts process, redevelopment of One Leisure, St Ives and investigations involving employees) have been noted by the Corporate Governance Panel prior to their approval by the Managing Director (Resources).

### **TRAINING FOR CORPORATE GOVERNANCE PANEL**

In their review of the programme of their activities in 2013, the Corporate Governance Panel has expressed concern that there is insufficient meeting time to be able to give the necessary attention to the workload envisaged. The Panel requested that two extra dates be included in the 2013/14 calendar of meetings for this purpose but with the proviso that these may be cancelled should it transpire that the meetings are not required.

### **LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY TO WIND TURBINE DEVELOPMENT – DRAFT REVISION TO WIND POWER SPD 2006**

As part of the consultation process, the Development Management Panel has had the opportunity to consider the draft revision to the Wind Power SPD which was first adopted in February 2006. Given the various views held by Panel Members, all were encouraged to make individual representations to respond to the consultation. Notwithstanding, the Panel indicated their support for the issue of the draft SPD for consultation, accepted that it required updating and indicated their intention to work with the new SPD when it emerged.

At the same meeting, the Panel indicated that they would have been minded to refuse an application for the erection of three wind turbines and associated development on land north west of Church Farm, Rectory Lane, Southoe. The final decision on this application will be made by an Inspector following an appeal against non determination by the applicant.

Fifteen applications were approved and three refused by the Panel at the same meeting.