

## 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, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 5 November 2013.

PRESENT: Councillor S J Criswell – Chairman.

Councillors K M Baker, R C Carter, I J Curtis, Mrs P A Jordan, P Kadewere, M C Oliver and J W G Pethard.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors R Fuller, C R Hyams and S M Van De Kerkhove.

### **53. COUNCILLOR C R HYAMS**

In noting that Councillor C R Hyams' wife had sadly passed away earlier that day, Members extended their thoughts to Councillor Hyams at this difficult time.

### **54. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 5th November 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **55. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Councillor Mrs P A Jordan declared a non-disclosable pecuniary interest in Minute No. 13/59 (c) by virtue of being an employee of the NHS.

### **56. NOTICE OF EXECUTIVE KEY DECISIONS**

The Panel considered and noted the current Notice of Executive Key Decisions (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which had been prepared by the Executive Leader of the Council for the period 25th October 2013 to 31st March 2014. The Reconnections Policy would be submitted to a future meeting of the Panel.

### **57. UPDATE ON REDESIGN OF LOCAL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

The Panel received a report from the Clinical Commissioning Group (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), which contained a position statement on the on-going implementation of the redesign of local mental health services. A question on the number of acute referrals made from the Hinchingsbrooke catchment area to Fulbourn and to Peterborough would be put to representatives of the Clinical Commissioning Group when they attended the Panel's meeting in January 2013. Assurances would also be sought that continuing support was provided to mental health patients who had been

discharged into the community. In noting that redesigned community services were being introduced, the Panel agreed to postpone its planned public consultation on mental health services until this process had been completed.

## **58. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED

that the press and public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to

- (a) the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information); and
- (b) consultation or negotiations in connection with labour relations between the Council and its employees.

## **59. FACING THE FUTURE 2013**

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

*(Councillors J D Ablewhite, Mrs B Boddington, P L E Bucknell, D B Dew, R S Farrer, Mrs L Kadic, P D Reeve, T V Rogers and R J West were also in attendance for this item).*

With the assistance of a briefing note which had been prepared by the Scrutiny and Review Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel was reminded of the Facing the Future process that had been adopted to undertake reviews of all Council services. Members' attention was drawn to Section 6 of the briefing note, which set out their role in the process. They were also reminded of their responsibilities under the Code of Conduct in respect of the treatment of confidential information.

The Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing delivered an overview of the Planning service and drew Members' attention to the statutory and prescriptive nature of its role, the existing pressures placed upon Officers and current areas of work. It had successfully generated income for the Council and the Executive Councillor's vision for the service centred on offering increased levels of consultancy to other authorities.

### **(a) Development Management**

The Panel considered the strategic service review template for the Development Management service (a copy of which is appended in the annex to the Minute Book). In doing so, the Planning Service Manager (Development Management) delivered an outline of the service and provided data on the performance of the authority in comparison with national statistics.

A number of areas were challenged which included the likely

costs of selling the service's expertise, the reasons for not recommending that some planning responsibilities were devolved to Town and Parish Councils, likely income generation trends and whether consideration had been given to restructuring the management of the service.

Following discussion, the Panel agreed upon its recommendations for priority areas for the service to pursue and took note of other suggestions offered by the Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing for improving the service's financial performance. The outcome of work on them would be submitted to the Panel in due course.

**(b) Planning Policy**

The Panel gave consideration to the strategic service review template for Planning Services (Policy) (a copy of which is appended in the annex to the Minute Book). In introducing the template, the Planning Service Manager (Policy) briefly outlined the work of the teams for which he was responsible. He also referred to the benefits of being part of the Joint Strategic Planning Unit, which included enabling income to be generated.

The Panel questioned whether the Planning Policy Team would require fewer resources once work on the new Local Plan had been completed. Members also questioned whether the anticipated level of income from more consultancy work was sufficiently ambitious. They then challenged plans to make more use of technology to enable the service to perform more effectively and efficiently. The Assistant Director, Environment, Growth and Planning confirmed that a number of other service areas had identified this theme and that this work would have to be managed.

The Panel agreed upon proposed priority areas to take forward and made suggestions about how some of them might be varied.

**(c) Strategic Housing**

Consideration was given to the strategic review template for the Strategic Housing service (a copy of which is appended in the annex to the Minute Book). The Housing Strategy Manager outlined the service's role and drew particular attention to the range of work being undertaken with other authorities and partners. The latter included health and social care organisations.

In response to a question by a Member, it was confirmed that little priority was accorded to bringing empty properties within the District back into use as there were very few such properties and each case required significant levels of resources. Having suggested that, given the Strategic Housing section's underlying links to the Planning Services (Policy) section, the two might be merged, agreement was reached on proposed priority areas for the service to

investigate through the Facing the Future process.

Chairman