

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING) held in the Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 14 January 2014.

PRESENT: Councillor G J Bull – Chairman.

Councillors M G Baker, K M Baker,
Mrs M Banerjee, J W Davies, R S Farrer,
D Harty, Ms L Kadic and Mrs D C Reynolds.

Mr D Hopkins – Co-opted Member.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors I C Bates and D A Giles.

60. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Panel held on 4th and 10th December 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

61. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were received.

62. NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Panel considered and noted the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which had been prepared by the Leader of the Council for the period 1st January to 30th April 2014. In response to a question about the Huntingdon West Masterplan, it was confirmed that the document would provide a detailed design guide for sites identified within the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan. Having regard to the A14, the Assistant Director for Environment, Growth and Planning explained that this item might be brought forward from April to March 2014, but this was largely dependent on the Highways Agency determining how it would proceed with the next stage of the consultation.

63. RENEWAL OF GREAT FEN PROJECT COLLABORATION AGREEMENT

(Councillor N J Guyatt, Executive Councillor for Strategic Housing and Planning, and Councillor D B Dew, Steering Group Member for the Great Fen Project, were in attendance for consideration of this item).

With the aid of a report by the Assistant Director for Environment, Growth and Planning (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Panel gave consideration to a proposal to renew the Great Fen Project Collaboration Agreement, which was due to expire in

March 2014. Councillor N J Guyatt, Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing, outlined the aims of the Project when it was first initiated in the 1990s and its current objectives. He reported that the District Council was one of the five founding Partners alongside the Environment Agency, Middle Level Commissioners, Natural England and the Wildlife Trust.

Councillor D B Dew, Steering Group Member for the Great Fen Project, then explained the role of the Steering Group in governing the work of the Project and drew attention to the budget monitoring it undertook on a quarterly basis. One of the benefits of being involved in the Project was that it gave the Council the ability to provide technical expertise and guidance on a number of Project related matters, such as planning applications and the design of the new Visitors Centre.

In response to a question by a Member on what benefits the Project delivered to the District, the Assistant Director for Environment, Growth and Planning explained that it had brought a number of economic benefits including the creation of new agricultural jobs, enhanced levels of local contracting, increased volunteering opportunities and attracting visitors to the District. These trends were predicted to increase in the future.

In noting that the Council matched the funding provided by the four other founding Partners of the Project, the Panel was advised that this was utilised to fund the Great Fen Project Manager's post and to stage ad-hoc promotional/educational events. Peterborough City and Cambridgeshire County Councils were "observing Partners" on the Steering Group, but it was hoped that they both would provide the Project with funding in the future.

A brief discussion ensued on the Visitor Centre which would be developed during the life of the new agreement. In response to questions, it was confirmed that the Centre would be owned by the Wildlife Trust and that there would, therefore, be no financial risk to the Council.

Having expressed their support for the renewal of the Agreement and their wish to continue monitoring the development of the Project, it was

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be recommended to approve the renewal of the Great Fen Project Collaboration Agreement for a further five year period.

64. HUNTINGDONSHIRE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP GROWTH AND INFRASTRUCTURE THEMATIC GROUP

(Councillor N J Guyatt, Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing and Chairman of the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership - Growth and Infrastructure Thematic Group, was in attendance for this item).

The Panel received and noted a report by the Planning Service Manager (Policy) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), which provided an update on the work of the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership – Growth and Infrastructure Thematic Group. In his introductory remarks, Councillor N J Guyatt, Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing and Chairman of the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership – Growth and Infrastructure Thematic Group, reported that the Group's main role was to identify key infrastructure projects within the District and to recommend priorities for the allocation of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding for these projects to the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership Board and the Cabinet. As part of this work, the Group developed an Infrastructure Business Plan each year.

Members' attention was drawn to the difficulties experienced in recruiting a Town/Parish Council representative as a member of the Group. Attempts had previously been made through the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils; however, it remained a concern that no single individual would be able represent the views of the District's Towns and Parishes as a whole. In an attempt to resolve this issue the Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing would be writing to all Towns and Parishes requesting them to offer alternative solutions.

Following a question by a Member whether the Council had started receiving CIL receipts, it was reported that some funding had been received but that the effects of the transition from the Section 106 regime to CIL were still materialising. Greater levels of receipts from CIL were expected in future years.

The Panel was advised that appropriate governance arrangements were in place. In particular, a clear audit trail in respect of the procurement of infrastructure works had been established. Having confirmed that CIL funding was not site specific and could be utilised anywhere within the District, the Panel

RESOLVED

that the content of the report now submitted be noted.

65. FACING THE FUTURE

The Chairman delivered an update on the Facing the Future process. The Overview and Scrutiny Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen had met on 18th December 2013 to review the complete list of potential savings and discuss the priorities that items might be accorded. Further meetings would be held on 9th and 16th January 2014. The Council's Chief Officer Management Team would be present at the latter meeting. It was noted that an informal Cabinet away-day had been arranged for late January 2014 to enable Executive Councillors to consider the outcome of the Panels' deliberations and their own priorities. Reports on progress would then be submitted to Overview and Scrutiny and to the Cabinet in February 2014.

In response to a question by a Member on whether details of the prioritisation process were available, the Chairman reported that this

was a collective exercise being undertaken with the other Overview and Scrutiny Panel Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen and that consensus had not been reached on the list of priorities. It was, therefore, premature to release any of the conclusions reached to date.

Members then challenged whether they would have sufficient involvement in the next phase of the process and requested an opportunity to comment on the proposed priority lists. It was confirmed that a report containing the priority lists would be submitted to the Panel at its February 2014 meeting in advance of its consideration by the Cabinet. Members expressed a wish to receive feedback from the Cabinet. The Assistant Director for Environment, Growth and Planning also confirmed that reports on specific proposals arising from the Facing the Future exercise would be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels at the appropriate time.

66. WORK PLAN STUDIES

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

67. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENTAL 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. A brief update was delivered on the development of a new Corporate Plan, which would be launched on 1st April 2014.

Having regard to the Tree Strategy and Design Principles for Future Development Working Groups, the Chairman indicated that he had sought an update from the Planning Service Manager (Policy) directly and that it was likely that meetings would be required in mid-March and May/June 2014 respectively to consider progress of matters within their remits. He further indicated that the Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Turbine Development – Draft Revised Supplementary Planning Document would be made available in April 2014.

In noting that reports on the whole system approach to waste would be submitted to the Panel in due course, the Executive Councillor for Environment stated that there was a desire amongst RECAP Member representatives for ongoing work to be expedited. A meeting to discuss how this might be achieved would be held on 7th February 2014.

Councillor Mrs L Kadic encouraged Town and Parish Council representatives to attend the consultation meetings being held on the Cambridgeshire Future Transport Initiative.

The Chairman proposed to remove Recycling in Flats from the work

programme because residents of some flats' inability to recycle waste materials was the result of inadequate provision within their buildings. This was the responsibility of the landlord and it was largely a Ward matter. As a way forward, it was suggested that the relevant Member should address his concerns directly to the Chief Executive of the relevant Registered Social Landlord. Following discussion, it was suggested that the matter could be revisited if there was evidence of a need to develop a policy to improve recycling in flats across the District.

68. SCRUTINY

The 140th Edition of the Decision Digest was received and noted.

Chairman