

A **SPECIAL** meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMIC WELL-BEING)** will be held in **CIVIC SUITE 0.1A, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON PE29 3TN** on **THURSDAY, 28 NOVEMBER 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 - 8)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meetings held on 7th and 14th November 2013.

**Mrs C Bulman
388234**

2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

To receive from Members declarations as to disclosable pecuniary, non disclosable pecuniary or non pecuniary interests in relation to any Agenda Item.

3. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

To resolve –

that the 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 relation matters between the Council and its employees.

4. FACING THE FUTURE 2013 (Pages 9 - 10)

Please refer to the attached Process Note.

**S Couper
388103**

Members are reminded of their responsibilities under the Code of Conduct in respect of the treatment of confidential matters. In addition, if there are any questions/requests for additional information, then please raise them in advance of the meeting with the relevant Officer.

(a) Procurement (Pages 11 - 14)

Strategic Service Review template attached.

**N Arkle
388104**

(b) Internal Audit, Insurance & Risk Management (Pages 15 - 20)

Strategic Service Review template attached.

**D Harwood
388115**

(c) Accountancy (Pages 21 - 28)

Strategic Service Review template attached.

**C Mason
388157**

(d) Finance (Corporate and Technical) (Pages 29 - 30)

Strategic Service Review template attached.

**S Couper
388103**

Dated this 20 day of November 2013



Head of Paid Service

Notes

1. 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.*

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.

2. Filming, Photography and Recording at Council Meetings

The District Council supports the principles of openness and transparency in its decision making and permits filming, recording and the taking of photographs at its meetings that are open to the public. It also welcomes the use of social networking and micro-blogging websites (such as Twitter and Facebook) to communicate with people about what is happening at meetings. Arrangements for these activities should operate in accordance with guidelines agreed by the Council and available via the following link - [filming, photography and recording at council meetings.pdf](#) or on request from the Democratic Services Team. The Council understands that some members of the public attending its meetings may not wish to be filmed. The Chairman of the meeting will facilitate this preference by ensuring that any such request not to be recorded is respected.

Please contact Mrs Claire Bulman, Democratic Services Officer, Tel 01480 388234 / email Claire.Bulman@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 Committee/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 (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.

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HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMIC WELL-BEING) held in CIVIC SUITE 0.1A, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON PE29 3TN on Thursday, 7 November 2013.

PRESENT: Councillor T V Rogers – Chairman.

Councillors S Akthar, G J Bull, E R Butler,
S Cawley, S Greenall, R Harrison,
M F Shellens and A H Williams.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors P L E Bucknell and P G Mitchell.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors S J Criswell, J A Gray and R J West.

46. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3rd October 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

47. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor M F Shellens declared a non pecuniary interest in Minute No. 50(a) as a Director of Luminus Homes.

Councillor B S Chapman declared a non pecuniary interest in Minute No. 50(a) as a Director of a residential lettings company.

48. NOTICE OF EXECUTIVE KEY DECISIONS

The Panel considered and noted the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). In doing so, Members received further information on the item entitled 'Loan in accordance with Treasury Management Strategy' which would be considered by the Cabinet on 21st November 2013. The Chairman would be provided with a copy of the report when it was available.

49. EXCLUSION OF THE 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 the financial or business affairs of a particular person (including the authority holding that information); and to consultation or negotiations in connection with labour relations between the Council and its employees.

50. FACING THE FUTURE 2013

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

(Councillors S J Criswell, J A Gray 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.

(a) Housing Needs Service

Following a brief introduction by the Executive Councillor for Customer Services, the Panel examined the Strategic Service Review template for the Housing Needs Service (a copy of which is appended in the annex to the Minute Book). Members asked a number of questions regarding the financial information presented and the Service's performance against its service standards.

Having recognised that the largest area of 'other expenditure' was to provide temporary accommodation for homeless people, the Panel discussed the the schemes which had been or were shortly expected to be brought on line to reduce the Council's used of bed and breakfast accommodation. The Panel also discussed whether the Council could build its own temporary accommodation and the Service's management arrangements. A number of suggestions were made in these regards.

The Panel then addressed each of the Facing the Future themes in turn. Members made suggestions for generating additional income and expressed their support for proposals for the use of the Council's own assets. It was also suggested that further consideration should be given to the way temporary accommodation was procured. In terms of demand management, the Panel was assured that the service had gone as far as possible with the implementation of initiatives for self service. Members have also discussed the opportunities that existed for Smart Investment.

A number of areas were challenged by the Panel. Members were of the opinion that the proposals for alternative service delivery arrangements should be given a different priority to that suggested and that consideration might be given to other options if this did not materialise. Members commented that the further efficiencies largely had already been incorporated within the Council's 'targeted savings'.

Arising from the discussion, it was suggested that the current arrangements for administrative support within the Authority

should be reviewed.

(b) Customer Services

The Executive Councillor for Customer Services introduced the Strategic Service Review template for Customer Services (a copy of which is appended in the annex to the Minute Book). During examination of the financial information, Members sought clarification of a number of areas and commented on the Service's performance against the budget in the preceding three years. Members were assured that all service areas that had experienced similar trends would be challenged to review their budget requirements in the forthcoming months. A number of questions were also raised with regard to service standards and performance.

Having commented on the service levels which were currently provided, Members indicated that they would not wish them to change. They then discussed a range of issues relating to the future delivery of the service which were outlined within the options presented. These included options for the Call Centre. A number of suggestions contained in the service template were endorsed. Further suggestions were made for extending its scope of operation.

The Panel considered future service provision in other areas of the District and suggested that the business case should be examined for the introduction of alternative customer service mechanisms in these areas. Differing views were expressed in this respect as a Strategy recently had been approved, which would obviate the need for them. In addition, further work was required on the Authority's website.

(c) Benefits

The Panel gave consideration to the Strategic Service Review template for the Benefits Service (a copy of which is appended in the annex to the Minute Book). Having been advised of the activities of this Service, Members were reminded that the majority of its workload was a statutory function and that the other activities were necessary to ensure that mistakes were not made in this complex area.

In considering the contents of the template, Members were mindful that, owing to changes brought about by the Government's Welfare Reform programme, the Benefits Section and Fraud Team were in a state of transition. This meant that the range of options in this area was limited. The Panel discussed the continued need for elements of the service.

The Panel discussed in turn each of the suggestions, which had been made for generating further efficiencies. The Panel was of the view that one of the proposals should be

withdrawn and that the priority of another should be changed to mitigate any risk to the Authority. Having been informed that a review of the Council Tax Support scheme was planned for 2015/16, it was suggested that any changes should be publicised well in advance of their implementation.

In terms of the other Facing the Future themes, the Panel received an update on the current position. However, some reservations were expressed about the preferred course of development.

(d) Local Taxation

With the aid of the Strategic Service Review template for the Local Taxation Service (a copy of which is appended in the annex to the Minute Book) Members were reminded that this was a predominantly statutory service and that the recent Council Tax technical reforms had affected the Authority's income. Their attention was also drawn to what the impact on the Council's income would be if there was a very minor reduction in the Council's collection rate.

The Panel received an explanation of current government policy on the collection and retention of National Non-Domestic Rates. Comment was then made on the service standards and the actual spending trends compared with the budget.

Suggestions had been made for further efficiencies including reducing the cost associated with the manual handling of cheques and improved use of Information Technology generally. Although it would be easy to achieve, Members suggested that there should be further analysis of the potential impact of the proposal for NNDR discretionary relief. Members also challenged the assumptions which had been made about externally obtaining services.

A discussion then ensued on the way in which the rateable value of a property was determined. Members were informed that this set by the Valuation Office and only changed when a property was sold or when a new valuation list was produced. The latter happened infrequently. A change here could generate significant income for the Authority.

Having been acquainted with the investigations that were being undertaken to identify potential savings for the service as a whole, Members expressed the view that the Council should seek to protect its current income levels and that this should not be put at risk as a consequence of trying to generate minor savings opportunities. A recommendation was, therefore, made about the priority that should be accorded to this work.

Chairman

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMIC WELL-BEING) held in Meeting Room 0.1A/B, Pathfinder House, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Thursday, 14 November 2013.

PRESENT: Councillor T V Rogers – Chairman.

Councillors P L E Bucknell, G J Bull,
E R Butler, R Harrison, P G Mitchell,
M F Shellens and A H Williams.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors S Cawley, K J Churchill and S Greenall.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Mrs L Kadić and R J West.

51. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

52. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the 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.

53. FACING THE FUTURE 2013

(a) Information Management Division

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

(At 20.05pm during the discussion on this item, Councillor G J Bull left the meeting).

(At 20.35pm during the discussion on this item, Councillor M F Shellens left the meeting).

The Panel considered the Strategic Service Review template for the Information Management Division (a copy of which is

appended in the annex to the Minute Book). To assist the Panel with its deliberations a breakdown of other expenditure in IMD Developments and IMD Operations was circulated.

By way of introduction, the Executive Councillor informed the Panel that the Information Management Division (IMD) had received excellent user ratings. He outlined some of the work that the Division undertook, together with the investigations which were currently being carried out on the changes that might be made to this work.

Having been reminded that the Division supported the delivery of other strategies approved by the Council, Members asked a number of questions regarding the operation of the Service. Amongst the issues discussed were the responsibility for the IMD project programme, the arrangements for funding IT projects, IT equipment and systems and the projects which were being undertaken by the Division. Members requested a copy of the existing ICT Strategy and a list of the current projects, including their cost, state of progress and financial impact. They also examined the revenue generated by the service.

Although the Panel was of the opinion that the options listed in the template should be investigated, given that many other services would be requiring additional assistance from IMD to deliver their own savings, Members expressed reservations about the expected timescale of some of them. Early implementation could be more costly. In response to a number of other concerns, Members were advised of the potential benefits which could be obtained through the proposed course of action and assured that no decision would be made unless it was established that it would provide the best benefit for the Authority. It was suggested that the Council should continue to maintain a reserve position which might provide the required extra resilience. If it was decided not to proceed with the preferred approach, the Council would re-visit the other options for savings. Further information would be required for this purpose.

The Panel received an explanation of the staffing arrangements within the Development Team, expenditure on Hired Staff and the benefits which had been obtained from the Cambridgeshire Public Services Network (CPSN). Having been reminded that the Division supported all the Council's statutory duties, Members commented that it had played a key role in achieving efficiency savings for other areas of the Council, which had not been recognised within the template. The Panel requested further information on the impact of reducing or ceasing activities in other areas of the Council on the IMD division.

The Panel discussed and challenged some of the Facing the Future themes within the template. This included the need to introduce efficiencies before alternative means of service

delivery were considered, the approach that had been adopted to website design, the resources provided to Members and the Service's standards of operation.

Chairman

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Agenda Item 4

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3, 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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