

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING) held in Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 17 June 2014.

- PRESENT: Councillor G J Bull – Chairman.
- Councillors M G Baker, I C Bates, Mrs B E Boddington, J W Davies, D A Giles, G J Harlock, Ms L Kadic, M C Oliver and R J West.
- APOLOGY: An Apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor B Hyland.
- IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors D B Dew, Ms A L Dickinson, R Fuller, M F Shellens and D M Tysoe.

5. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Panel held on 8th April and 4th June 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor G J Harlock declared a non-statutory disclosable interest in Minute No. 14/10 as a resident of a private road.

7. 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 Executive Leader of the Council for the period 1st June to 31st December 2014. It was noted that items entitled Civil Parking Enforcement, A Tree Strategy for Huntingdonshire, Carbon Management Plan and Huntingdon West Masterplan had been deferred for consideration at future meetings of the Cabinet. Having regard to the Tree Strategy, Members agreed to appoint Councillor R J West on to the Tree Strategy Working Group.

In noting that the Cabinet would be considering the Recycling Contract Award at its June 2014 meeting, the Head of Operations delivered a brief update on the outcome of the tender process and the net benefit of the new contract to the Council.

At the request of the Chairman, the Executive Councillor for Environment delivered a presentation on the areas of responsibility falling within his portfolio. He drew attention to the challenges his services faced, the opportunities which had emerged and the objectives he intended to pursue in the short, medium and long term.

It was agreed that the Panel should look at whether a study should be undertaken into the Council's litter policies and practices. The views of members of the public would need to be taken into account if it was decided to proceed with an in-depth investigation.

RESOLVED

that Councillor R J West be appointed on to the Tree Strategy Working Group.

8. FLOOD RISK IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE - PRESENTATION FROM MIDDLE LEVEL COMMISSIONERS

(Mr I A D Smith, Clerk and Chief Executive of Middle Level Commissioners, and Councillor P G Mitchell, the Council's representative on the Middle Level Commissioners, were in attendance for this item).

The Chairman reminded Members that the Panel had appointed a Working Group to review the effectiveness of flood protection schemes in the District. Following changes to the Panel's Membership this Municipal Year, the Panel appointed Councillor R J West on to the Working Group.

Councillor P G Mitchell, the Council's representative on the Middle Level Commissioners, drew the Panel's attention to the Internal Drainage Board and Middle Level Commissioners' cost to the District Council over the previous four year period. Mr I A D Smith, Clerk and Chief Executive of Middle Level Commissioners, then delivered a comprehensive presentation on the background to the Commissioners' work, their relationship with the nine Internal Drainage Boards within the District and how funding was distributed across the Middle Level area. He went on to provide a detailed account of the significance of the St Germans pumping station and referred to planned works at Bevills Leam Pumping Station and Salters Lode Lock and the extent of work undertaken with Partners on water management, which included the Great Fen.

In response to a question by the Chairman on the expected life of the St Germans Pumping Station, it was reported that the Station had a budget life of around 75 years but that in practice it was likely to be shorter as there had already been some expenditure on renewing the pumps. It was further reported that the Middle Level had a bank raising programme, which was costly, so attempts were being made to secure grant aid for this work in the future.

Clarification was then received on the responsibilities of Internal Drainage Boards in looking after water courses to ensure the free flow of water across the Middle Level area. The Panel acknowledged the difficulties that were encountered in encouraging riparian landowners to maintain their water courses and the extent of maintenance work undertaken to clear silt, weed and blockages from rivers.

A Member enquired whether new housing developments had an impact on the Middle Level area. In response Mr Smith informed the Panel that water from such developments would get into the Internal Drainage Board systems and that all planning applications were

subject to a robust flood risk assessment as part of the planning process.

The Chairman thanked Mr Smith and Councillor Mitchell for their attendance at the meeting and commented that the information provided would greatly assist the Working Group with its investigations.

RESOLVED

that Councillor R J West be appointed to the Flood Prevention Working Group.

9. ACTION ON ENERGY SCHEME

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

Consideration was given to a report by the Environment Team Leader (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which provided an update on progress with the delivery of the Action on Energy scheme within the District. In introducing the report, Councillor D M Tysoe, Executive Member for Environment, reported on the award of £7.8 million of grant funding to the whole of Cambridgeshire from the Government's Green Deal Communities Fund. The funding would be distributed on a first come first served basis across Cambridgeshire.

The Environment Team Leader advised Members that the Action on Energy scheme was launched in November 2013 and had been designed to provide residents with a trusted local authority backed way of obtaining home energy efficiency improvements. Whilst the funding would predominantly be used to help residents meet the costs of installing solid wall insulation, a proportion would be used to encourage property owners to make energy efficiency improvements within the private rented sector. Members' attention was then drawn to the terms of the Government's Green Deal Home Improvement Fund, which offered residents a cashback incentive to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. They were advised that the Council had also received £26,000 of revenue funding to offset the cost of Officers distributing the funding and a further allocation of £10,000 for the St Ives Green House to showcase Green Deal products and technologies. Having regard to the latter, the Executive Member for Environment reported that the Council intended to dispose of the two properties by the end of the financial year.

In response to a question by a Member, it was confirmed that publicity for the scheme would be targeted at qualifying households, which predominately existed within the fen area of the District. A further question was asked about whether there was sufficient take up by businesses of training of installers. To date, 18 companies had achieved accreditation and more were in the pipeline. It was then confirmed that any works undertaken by an accredited installer would be guaranteed for 25 years. In the event that a company ceased trading within the guarantee period, responsibility for the works would rest with the Government. An alternative accredited provider would undertake any remedial works. The Council would have no liability.

Having noted that a trial scheme to insulate park homes was currently being undertaken in St Neots, the Panel requested that the findings of the scheme were reported Members in the future. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the work of the Council's Environment Team in delivering Action on Energy to ensure maximum benefit from the scheme for the residents of Huntingdonshire be noted;
- (b) that the award of significant grant funding of £7.8 million from the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) Green Deal Communities Fund to enhance the offer to householders be welcomed; and
- (c) that the positive revenue implications of the scheme including an anticipated revenue income for the Council of £10,000 per annum from measures installed and a further £26,000 during the current financial year to offset the cost of Officer time spent managing and implementing the Green Deal Communities Fund grant in the District be acknowledged.

10. WASTE POLICIES

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

(Councillors Mrs A L Dickinson, R Fuller and M F Shellens were also in attendance for this item).

With the aid of a report by the Operations Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel gave consideration to proposed revisions to the Council's Waste Collection Policies in relation to the collection points for wheeled bins/sacks from more remote properties (farms and lodges) and to additional green bins. In introducing the report, Councillor D M Tysoe, Executive Councillor for Environment, stated that the report which had been prompted by the drive to identify efficiency savings for the Council. He then proposed that the decision on the policy on collection points for wheeled bins/sacks from remote properties (farms and lodges) should be deferred for further consideration pending completion of additional work. A survey would be undertaken of all relevant properties and a full range of options would be identified before a decision was made. Mr E Kendall, Head of Operations, then drew the Panel's attention to a number of health and safety issues associated with collecting refuse from long and narrow lanes and unadopted roads. He also referred to the impact of this type of work on collection crews, vehicles and costs to the Council.

Disappointment was expressed over the absence of prior communication with Members on the proposals in advance of letters being sent out to affected residents. Assurances were received that communications with Members on these and other future changes would form part of the further investigations.

Councillor G J Harlock referred to the potential scale of the implications of the proposed policy on collections points for those residing on private roads. He stated that he would not support the policy in its present form. Councillor R Fuller then drew the Panel's attention to the impact of the proposals on some residents within his Ward whose road had not been adopted by Cambridgeshire County Council. Their refuse had been collected from outside their properties for the past 34 years but, following a complaint, the collection arrangements had been changed. The Head of Operations explained that there was a need for the Council to obtain the legal right to enter such roads, and this had resulted in the Council ceasing to collect the residents' bins from outside their properties until this had been resolved. The Panel, therefore, recommended that the position of residents living on all private/unadopted roads and on new housing developments should be clarified and taken into account when the new policy was formulated. Members also suggested that more robust data should be obtained on the number of properties that might be affected by the proposed changes as, for example, RAF Wyton contained 600 houses on unadopted estate roads.

Having expressed their satisfaction with the terms of the amended policy relating to additional green bins, a suggestion was accepted that the Panel's Waste Collections Working Group should be reconvened to assist the Head of Operations and the Executive Member for Operations to review and develop the policy on collection points.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Cabinet be recommended to approve amendments to the Waste Collection Policies in respect of additional green bins, namely Policy 31D and 31H, as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report now submitted;
- (b) that the Waste Collections Working Group be reconvened to assist the Head of Operations and Executive Member for Environment with reviewing the policies in relation to the collection points for wheeled bins/sacks for remote properties (farms and lodges); and
- (c) that Councillors M G Baker, G J Bull, D A Giles and G J Harlock be appointed onto the Waste Collections Working Group.

11. WIND ENERGY DEVELOPMENT IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE 2014 SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

(Councillor D B Dew, Executive Member for Planning and Housing Strategy, was in attendance for this meeting).

With the aid of a report prepared by the Landscape Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel gave consideration to the revised Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for Wind Energy Development in Huntingdonshire 2014. Councillor D B Dew, Executive Member for Planning and Housing Strategy, reminded

Members of the need to revise the SPD on Wind Power, which was adopted by the Council in 2006. There had been significant changes in national and local planning policy, various permissions had been granted and a number of turbines had been constructed throughout the District. He went on to report that the revised SPD would strengthen the Council's case at Public Inquiries and the general course of the planning process.

In response to questions, it was confirmed that paragraph 17.24 of the SPD addressed the matter of separation distances, which had previously been raised by Members. This matter had been the subject of a study undertaken by consultants and Members were advised that recent cases had established that the Council should not specify absolute numbers but that it could identify where cumulative effects were likely to occur.

Having been informed of the Development Management Panel's deliberations on the SPD and received assurances that it was sufficiently robust to withstand an appeal, it was

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be recommended to endorse the recommendations contained within the report by the Landscape Officer.

12. A14 CAMBRIDGE TO HUNTINGDON - RESPONSE TO HIGHWAYS AGENCY DEVELOPMENT CONSENT ORDER PRE-APPLICATION STATUTORY CONSULTATION

The Panel received and noted a report by the Head of Development (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which outlined the Council's response to the statutory pre-application consultation being undertaken by the Highways Agency on the Development Consent Order for the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon improvement scheme. The Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing reported that the Highways Agency planned to commence construction works in 2016, which would take up to three years to complete. The Panel's attention was drawn to the mitigation measures outlined in Annex C to the report which had been incorporated to protect villages affected by the development. The Transportation Team Leader went on to report on two changes which had been made to the development proposals; namely the alteration to the realignment of the A1/A14 corridor west of Brampton and the decision that tolling would no longer form part of the scheme.

Councillor M F Shellens addressed the Panel on the concerns of the residents of Brampton that the scheme would increase pollution and traffic congestion in the village and expressed support for the mitigation measures proposed by the Council. In response to a question by Councillor Shellens about the length of time it would take to remove the Huntingdon viaduct, the Transportation Team Leader informed the Panel that this work was likely to take around 18 months to complete and would commence after the construction works to the new A14 had been completed. The construction works were expected to take three years.

The Panel endorsed a suggestion by Councillor I C Bates the section of the Council's response on mitigation measures should be strengthened as a further means of protecting affected villages. The view was held that this would explicitly state the Council's ongoing role as a Tier 1 partner in protecting areas of the District affected by the development. This role would include applying expertise on local circumstances to the plans, such as traffic projections for example for Thrapston Road, Brampton.

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be recommended to endorse the recommendations contained within the report now submitted on the proviso that paragraph 4 (g) of Annex C is strengthened to include the words "The District Council reserves its position on matters of detail, such as the mitigation of the impact of the development on affected villages, on which it will negotiate with the Highways Agency".

13. CAMBRIDGESHIRE FUTURE TRANSPORT INITIATIVE

RESOLVED

that Councillor Mrs L Kadic be appointed as the Panel's representative on the Cambridgeshire Future Transport Initiative.

14. 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.

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

(At 9.55pm, during discussion on this item, Councillor Mrs B E Boddington left the meeting).

The Panel received and noted a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which contained details of actions taken in response to recent discussions and decisions. In doing so, the Chairman requested Officers to arrange a site visit to the Great Fen and to extend the invitation to other Members. Owing to the fact that the procurement of materials recycling facilities would conclude on 20th June 2014, Officers were requested to rearrange the site visit to Alconbury Transfer Station and Waterbeach Waste Management Plant after that date.

It was envisaged that the Tree Strategy for Huntingdonshire would be submitted to the Panel in July 2014, with a meeting of the Working Group being held beforehand. The Membership of the Design Principles for Future Developments Working Group would be revisited

when further information on the Design Guide was available.

Councillor D A Giles drew attention to problems being experienced in his Ward with graffiti. He suggested that a study on how the Council responded to instances of graffiti should be added to the Panel's work programme.

16. SCRUTINY

The 145th Edition of the Decision Digest was received and noted.

Chairman