

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, 15 July 2014.

PRESENT: Councillor G J Bull – Chairman.

Councillors M G Baker, I C Bates,
Mrs B E Boddington, J W Davies, D A Giles,
B Hyland, Ms L Kadic, M C Oliver and
R J West.

APOLOGY: An Apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor G J Harlock.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors D B Dew and D M Tysoe.

17. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 17th June 2014 were approved as correct record and signed by the Chairman.

At the request of the Chairman, the Head of Development provided an update on the Bicton Public Inquiry and reported that during the proceedings reference had been made to the Wind Energy Development in Huntingdonshire 2014 Supplementary Planning Document. The outcome of the Inquiry was currently awaited from the Secretary of State.

18. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor I C Bates declared a non-disclosable pecuniary interest in Minute Nos. 14/21 and 14/22 by virtue of being Chairman of Cambridgeshire County Council's Economy and Environment Committee.

Councillor Mrs L Kadic declared a non-disclosable pecuniary interest in Minute No. 14/22 by virtue of being Chairman of the Huntingdon and Godmanchester Market Town Transport Strategy Member Steering Group.

19. 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 July 2014 to 31st January 2015. It was likely that the report on Civil Parking Enforcement would be deferred from the stated September 2014 meeting to a later date.

20. A TREE STRATEGY FOR HUNTINGDONSHIRE

(Councillors D B Dew and D M Tysoe, Executive Members for Strategic Planning and Housing and Operations and for Environment respectively, were in attendance for this item).

With the aid of a report by the Arboricultural Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel gave consideration to the content of the draft Tree Strategy for Huntingdonshire. The Strategy sought to provide a framework for the protection, maintenance and enhancement of trees within the District. It had been subject to prior review by the Panel's Tree Strategy Working Group. The Working Group was satisfied with the contents of the Strategy and had commended Officers on the production of the document.

The Panel was informed that the Strategy was intended for use as an electronic resource for interested stakeholders. Members welcomed the inclusion of associated policies and guidance notes on tree care, in particular the note on trees and development. All of the attachments had been compiled in accordance with national best practice and Government guidance.

In response to a comment by a Member that he sometimes experienced problems verifying the ownership of trees on public land, the Arboricultural Officer advised that the Action Plan included the production of a map of the Council's tree stock on a computerised tree management system. The Panel suggested that a mechanism should be introduced through which responsibility for trees which were perceived as being on land in public ownership could be identified.

The Panel drew attention to the importance of the Local Tree Warden Coordinators. Given the value of their work, it was further suggested that it could be beneficial to promote their role to establish a Warden in every Parish. Members then discussed the level of resources required to deliver the Strategy and concluded that the Council should increase the budget when resources allowed. It was recognised that the Strategy had an important role in reducing the risk to the Council in terms of claims made against the authority and consequently in reducing the Council's future insurance costs.

Having endorsed the content of the Strategy, the view was expressed that the commercial opportunities that the Strategy presented should be explored. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that subject to the comments outlined above, the content of the Tree Strategy for Huntingdonshire be endorsed;
- (b) that the Cabinet be recommended to adopt the Tree Strategy for Huntingdonshire, subject to any minor amendments being agreed between the Head of Development and the relevant Executive Members; and

- (c) that the Cabinet be recommended to authorise the Corporate Director (Delivery) to proceed with the implementation of the Action Plan 2015-2020.

21. CAMBRIDGESHIRE LONG-TERM TRANSPORT STRATEGY & LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 3 REFRESH

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

The Panel gave consideration to a report by the Head of Development (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) detailing progress of the development of the Draft Long Term Transport Strategy for Cambridgeshire and containing an update on the Local Transport Plan 3. Both documents were essential to the delivery of the growth agenda and had been developed in conjunction with neighbouring authorities to ensure a coordinated and collaborative approach was taken to transport planning.

The Panel's attention was drawn to the schemes planned for delivery by the public sector in the period from 2014 to 2021, which included proposals for Huntingdon, St Ives and St Neots, together with details of planned and potential rail service improvements in the Cambridgeshire area. Improvements to the A428 were assumed at this stage. The position would be confirmed when the Highways Agency released its Route Based Strategy in March 2015. A new rail station was proposed at Alconbury Weald, which was welcomed by the Panel.

Members were advised that the Strategy represented a radical change in approach to transport planning in the Cambridgeshire area and had widespread political support. It was emphasised that developments would be planned in the context of the transport system as a whole rather than as individual projects. The point was also made that transport infrastructure improvements would be needed before large scale housing growth took place. Importantly, if growth was to be delivered, Government funding would be required to meet the cost of such works.

The Panel discussed the risks associated with the Strategy and its underlying links with the planning process. Councillor I C Bates drew attention to a recent Planning Inspectorate decision, which demonstrated that planning decisions that took account of transport matters could have an unexpected effect on the local planning policy position. The Panel stressed that all steps should be taken to prevent similar unintended consequences arising in Huntingdonshire.

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be recommended to agree and note the current progress with the development of both the Cambridgeshire Long Term Transport Strategy and the refresh of Local Transport Plan 3.

22. DRAFT HUNTINGDON AND GODMANCHESTER MARKET TOWN TRANSPORT STRATEGY

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

With the aid of a report by the Head of Development (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel was apprised of progress with the development of a new Market Town Transport Strategy (MTTS) for Huntingdon and Godmanchester. Members were informed that the Strategy contained up to date detailed projects that would enable advantage to be taken of funding opportunities from a number of sources including Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy funding.

The Panel endorsed the key proposals outlined in the MTTS and acknowledged that difficult decisions would need to be taken in the future because the challenges identified could not be avoided. The Transportation Team Leader indicated that solutions to them would have to be found regardless of whether or not they were the preferred option. The example referred to was the Hartford and Godmanchester link road.

The Panel expressed support for the publication of the Strategy. Having paid tribute to Councillor Mrs L Kadic for Chairing the Member Steering Group, it was

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be recommended to

- (a) agree and note progress with the publication of the draft Huntingdon and Godmanchester Market Town Transport Strategy and confirm its support to the County Council; and
- (b) delegate authority to the Head of Development, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing, to make any minor changes to the draft Strategy following public consultation and prior to any final formal adoption.

23. SHARED SERVICE - BUILDING CONTROL

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

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Development (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) seeking approval to develop a business case for a shared Local Authority Building Control Service between Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire District Councils, including the use of the South Norfolk mobile working solution and to work towards an Eastern Region Building Control partnership arrangement. The proposals sought to maximise the potential to generate income, increase resilience and drive competitiveness. It was also expected that they would enhance the

customer experience, create efficiencies by maximising other shared infrastructure and IT and maximise staff development opportunities.

The Head of Development reported on the establishment of a Project Team and Project Board with relevant individuals from both authorities. In response to questions, the Panel was assured that staff were being engaged with from the outset and that career and development opportunities would emerge. In response to Members' concerns that the shared service might result in local knowledge and expertise being lost, it was reported that local teams would be established, which would prevent this from happening.

The Panel agreed that the Council should explore all four options for developing the shared service and was of the view that business cases should be developed as soon as possible. Given that the Building Control Service was in direct competition with the private sector, the Panel encouraged the Cabinet to give priority to completing the investigations into Options C and D as a matter of urgency.

RESOLVED

that subject to the comments outlined above, the Cabinet be recommended to

- (a) approve Option 1: To develop a business case for a shared Local Authority Building Control Service with South Cambridgeshire District Council;
- (b) approve Option 2: For the business case to include a viability assessment of the IT solution developed by South Norfolk District Council;
- (c) approve Option 3: To work with South Norfolk District Council and other interested local authorities local authorities to develop a proposal for an Eastern Region Approved Inspector Company, that will interact with the Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire Local Authority Building Control cluster.

24. 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.

25. 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. The Waste Collection Working Group had met since the Panel's last meeting.

26. SCRUTINY

The 146th Edition of the Decision Digest was received and noted.

27. COUNCILLOR D B DEW, EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING AND HOUSING

At the request of the Chairman, Councillor D B Dew, Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Housing, delivered a brief presentation on his portfolio responsibilities and the range of work on which he intended to focus in respect of the Planning and Housing services. He referred to the completion of the Local Plan, subsequent reviews of Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents together with the need to reduce housing waiting times, identify affordable housing solutions and encourage Parishes to take advantage of rural exception sites.

28. MISS H ALI

In noting that Miss H Ali would be leaving the District Council later that month, the Panel paid tribute to her hard work, skill and professionalism and extended their best wishes to her in her future career with Ofsted.

Chairman