

## 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 Wednesday, 4 February 2015.

PRESENT: Councillor G J Bull – Chairman.

Councillors M G Baker, Mrs B E Boddington, Mrs A D Curtis, J W Davies, R S Farrer, G J Harlock, Ms L Kadic, M C Oliver and R J West.

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor D B Dew, Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing.

The Chairman welcomed Councillor B S Farrer, who had recently been re-appointed to the Panel.

### **55. MINUTES**

Subject to the deletion of the words '9th and 20th February' from the third sentence of paragraph 2 of Minute No. 50, to be replaced by '9th February and 20th March' the Minutes of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **56. MEMBERS INTERESTS**

Councillor Ms L Kadic declared a non-disclosable pecuniary interest in Minute No. 14/57 by virtue of her membership of the Development Plan Policy Advisory Group.

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

The Notice of Key Executive Decisions which was published on 15th January 2015 was received and noted. Members were advised that a report on East Coast Mainline Crossing Closures would be submitted to their meeting in March, together with a progress report on the current position with the A14. It was envisaged that the Huntingdonshire Design Guide would be presented to Cabinet in April 2015.

### **58. LOCAL PLAN TO 2036 - TARGETED CONSULTATION**

*(Councillor D B Dew, Executive Councillor for Planning & Housing Strategy was in attendance for this item).*

Following a brief introduction by the Executive Councillor and with the assistance of a report by the Planning Service Manager (Policy), the Panel received an update on the current position with regard to the preparation of the draft Local Plan to 2036. Members were informed that the Stage 4 draft Plan had now been published for a targeted consultation and that they had an opportunity to submit individual representations during the consultation period. The feedback which had been received from the seminars with key stakeholders to-date had been positive and Members were asked to encourage their Town/ Parish Councils to submit any comments by the end of the consultation period.

The Panel then received an outline of the timetable for the adoption of the new Local Plan in 2016. Members were informed that following the targeted consultation, the Plan would be finalised for statutory pre-submission consultation, followed by formal submission at the end of the year to the Secretary of State / Planning Inspectorate for examination in public. Members discussed the possible outcomes of the examination and the implications for the Authority.

Having welcomed the decision by the Council to undertake additional targeted consultation at this stage of the process, Panel Members discussed a range of issues including provision for gypsy and traveller sites, affordable housing and rural exception sites. Whilst rural exception sites will not form part of the Local Plan, the need for affordable housing within the District was well recognised and a target of 35% for new development would be included within the Plan. Rural exception sites would provide a mechanism to encourage parishes to bring forward an area for development.

In response to a question as to whether there was a plan for the delivery of infrastructure the Executive Councillor outlined the difficulties in negotiating with the County Council under their new political management arrangements and suggested that a mechanism would need to be found to drive this forward. Members were also of the opinion that the message should be conveyed to local Members of Parliament that financial assistance would be essential to the delivery of the Local Plan and that further efforts were required to help to achieve this.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the dates for the targeted consultation (23 January to 20 March 2015); and
- (b) the opportunity for any Members to submit individual representations through the Objective consultation system be noted.

**59. CORPORATE PLAN - PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT (QUARTER 3)**

*(Councillor D B Dew, Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning & Housing was in attendance for the discussion on this item).*

With the assistance of a report by the Corporate Team Manager (a

copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel was updated with progress on the key activities identified within the Council's Corporate Plan during the period 1st October to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014. Panel Members then proceeded to review the actions and activities within the strategic theme to 'Enable Sustainable Growth'.

In reviewing the action to invest in initiatives that will deliver affordable housing, Members sought clarification as to the levels of affordable housing that are provided within new development and whether a minimum target should be incorporated into the Local Plan for both strategic and non-strategic development sites. In response to which, Members were advised the Council aspired to provide 35% affordable housing in all sites (both strategic and non-strategic). However in practice this was more achievable within the non-strategic sites as the competing infrastructure requirements within the more strategic sites may mean that the levels of affordable housing were driven down during negotiations. The Panel were advised that it would be difficult to state a minimum level within the Local Plan, and that efficiencies in the delivery of other infrastructure elements could be pursued. Comment was also made with regard to the need to find mechanisms to make the development of rural exception sites more attractive to developers as development in these areas could be crucial to the rural areas.

Members also sought clarification on the current position with regard to the potential loan to Luminus for extra care in St Ives. In response to which Officers explained that although due diligence has now been undertaken with regards to the loan, a revised planning application for the scheme was still outstanding.

With regards to the action to Update the Buildings at Risk Register, Members were informed that that vacancies within the Planning Policy Team had now been filled and the Executive Councillor was confident that the update to the 2011 Register would be started in Quarter 4. Members suggested that this should be treated as a priority for 2015.

In terms of enforcement, Members commented on the growing number of complaints that they were receiving from Parish Council's on this subject. The Panel were informed that the Cabinet were currently considering the Council's whole range of enforcement activities with a view to making improvements. To clarify the actions which can be undertaken by the Authority in relation to listed buildings and current enforcement activities, the Panel requested that a report should be submitted to a future meeting and that the Executive Councillor should be invited back to discuss the matter further at this time.

With regard to the processing of planning applications, the Panel noted that delays in validating applications and the issuing of older / out of time applications have continued to impact on performance figures in the quarter. In response to questions as to whether it will be possible to recover from the current position, the Executive Councillor explained that plans are in place to ensure that all applications will be validated within 1 week and older / out of time

applications determined before the end of the financial year. Members commented on the impact that this may have on the size of future Agendas for the Development Management Panel.

Having noted that the Executive Councillor was confident that the Authority would be able to recover its performance and meet nationally set performance targets from 1st April 2015, Members also received an update on the work which will be undertaken to improve the efficiency of the planning application process, to make planning officers more accountable and improve the operation of the Development Management Panel. Members were advised that there will be an opportunity for them to consider the proposed changes to the delegation arrangements in the Spring.

Finally and with reference to a recent example whereby a Member had sought to refer an application to the Development Management Panel, the Panel has discussed the engagement of Members within the Planning process and acknowledged that Members should raise any issues with an application at an early stage. Members were also reminded that the weekly list of applications provides an opportunity for Members to be kept up to date with issues within their wards and to keep an eye on the planning process.

**60. HUNTINGDONSHIRE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP - GROWTH & INFRASTRUCTURE THEMATIC GROUP - ANNUAL REPORT**

*(Councillor D B Dew, Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning & Housing was in attendance for the discussion on this item).*

With the assistance of a report by the Planning Service Manager (Policy) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel received an annual update on the work of the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership – Growth & Infrastructure Thematic Group.

Following a brief introduction by the Executive Councillor, Members were informed that the Group's role was to support and co-ordinate the strategic growth and infrastructure development for Huntingdonshire and to act as a Project Board for the delivery of the Infrastructure needs of the District. The role of the Group had developed in recent years and Members' attention was been drawn to the work which the Group has led, influenced or supported over the last year. Members were pleased to note that a Parish / Town Council representative had now been appointed to the Group.

Then Panel then received an update on the implementation of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). As part of which, details of demand notices that had been issued to developers for CIL payments, the reliefs and exemptions authorised and the monies that had been transferred to Town and Parish Councils were also provided. Members raised a number of specific questions with regard to the exemptions which could be authorised for self-builds which were responded to by the Planning Services Manager (Policy).

The Panel discussed the requirement to transfer a 'meaningful proportion of CIL receipts to the Town or Parish Council in the area of development. In response to Members questions as to how this

money is spent, the Panel noted that parishes are required to produce an annual report detailing expenditure, however there have been none received to-date. Having noted the intention of the Planning Policy Team to issue a reminder to Parish and Town Councils, Members emphasised the importance of receiving feedback from those to which CIL receipts have been paid and asked the Executive Councillor in his capacity as Chairman of Hemingford Grey Parish Council to be an exemplar in this regard. In terms of the Community Infrastructure Levy more generally, the Panel noted that a review of CIL is planned by government this year.

Having noted that those Parish Councils that have a Neighbourhood Development Plan in place were able to receive 25% of CIL receipts, Members expressed concerns that a number of parishes did not understand the neighbourhood planning process and the implications of producing one. In response to which, the Corporate Director (Delivery) undertook to bring a paper to a future meeting outlining the current position. Members were advised that the intention by Government in setting a higher percentage for those with neighbourhood plans, had been to encourage parishes and town councils to undertake this process.

Having noted that the future role of the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership was currently unknown and that a review of external partnerships was currently being undertaken, the Panel discussed the value which the Group brings to the District Council and Members attention was drawn to the observations of the Group itself, who were of the opinion that its existence helped to facilitate and speed up delivery of growth. Members concluded that the Group did bring value to the District Council, however Members would welcome further information as to its operation.

Whereupon it was

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report now submitted be noted.

**61. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMIC WELL-BEING) - PROJECT MANAGEMENT SELECT COMMITTEE**

As a consequence of a variation to the membership of the Panel at the Council meeting in December 2014, it was

RESOLVED

that Councillor R S Farrar be appointed to the Project Management Select Committee to replace Councillor B Hyland as one of the Panel's three representatives.

**62. WORK PLAN**

The Panel received and noted a report (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.

### **63. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING) - PROGRESS**

With the assistance of a report by the Democratic Services Team (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel reviewed the progress of its activities since the last meeting.

It was reported that a meeting of the Panel's Tree Strategy Working Group had been held on 14th January 2014 to review the content of the Huntingdonshire Tree Strategy prior to its publication on the Council's website later in the month. It was agreed that this should be retained on the progress report for the time being.

With regard to the Panel's other working groups, it was reported that a meeting of the Flood Prevention Working Group would be convened shortly to review the draft Cambridgeshire Flood and Water Supplementary Planning Document. Members also noted that additional resources had been brought in to assist with the survey work to inform the review of the Council's waste collection policies and it was hoped that it would be possible to report on progress at the next meeting. The Chairman undertook to speak with the Executive Councillor for Operations and Environment regarding the Panel's proposed study of Litter policies and practices.

With regard to the Panel's ongoing work on Rural Transport, Councillor Ms L Kadic provided an update on the Cambridgeshire Future Transport Initiative.

### **64. SCRUTINY**

The Panel received and noted the latest edition of the Decision Digest (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). In so doing, Members commented on the study which was being undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) with regard to neighbourhood planning given that this activity falls within their remit. Members also acknowledged the need to give further consideration to the allocation of performance indicators between the Panels to ensure that they are consistent with the Overview and Scrutiny remits.

Chairman