

## 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, 9th June 2015.

PRESENT: Councillor T D Sanderson – Chairman.  
Councillors I C Bates, Mrs S Conboy, J W Davies, Mrs A Dickinson, K D Wainwright and R J West.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors I D Gardener and P Kadewere.

### **4. MINUTES**

The minutes for the meetings held on 14th April and 20th May 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **5. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Councillors I C Bates and D Giles declared non-pecuniary interest in relation to Agenda Item 5 as members of Cambridgeshire County Council.

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

The Notice of Key Executive Decisions which was published on 20th May 2015 was received and noted.

### **7. CORPORATE PLAN PERFORMANCE MONITORING (QUARTER 4)**

The Members of the Panel discussed targets contained in the report and it was suggested that all information should be presented as a percentage. It was explained to the Panel that targets were quantified in various ways in order to make the information clear and simple to understand. For instance, the figure relating to sickness was presented as an average number of days lost rather than a percentage to provide a more meaningful figure that can be compared with others.

Members of the Panel queried targets relating to planning applications, suggesting that the target might not be high enough. The Panel noted that the targets presented were in-line with those set by central Government and have been agreed with the relevant Executive Councillor.

The Panel questioned the time taken to process planning applications and whether this could be improved. Members were informed that following changes made by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), applications would now be determined on time, with extensions being agreed with the applicant. The Panel

noted that a new Planning Service Manager (Development Management) would commence employment with the Council in August 2015, which would reduce the pressure on the department. Regarding the cause of delays in processing planning applications it was explained that issues such as staffing pressures, applicant mistakes and omission affected the rate at which applications were considered. The Members were assured that pressures were being reduced with a scope to deal with applications in a different way.

The Panel expressed concern about planning enforcement due to a lack of resources and the need for greater funding. The Panel agreed that the Council was delivering strong economic growth and the Panel noted that the Executive Leader of the Council was lobbying central Government for further funding.

The Panel concluded that a firm message needed to be sent to central Government that funding was required to consistently reach the targets that they had set.

**8. A14 JOINT LOCAL IMPACT REPORT, STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT MATTERS**

The Environmental Well-Being Panel have been informed that there are no planned 'Borrow Pit' additions following questions on potential changes. It was confirmed that no changes were imminent and any discrepancies that did occur would be resolved before the end of the examination period. Members noted that there was a Legacy meeting scheduled on 11th June 2015 to further discuss Borrow Pits, making sure that maintenance was upheld after the obligatory 10 years.

The Panel queried the routes for the aggregate deliveries during the A14 development and access issues that might arise from the work. It was explained that HE have indicated that the route of the new roads would bear the majority of the construction traffic, including a new 'Haul Route' between Ellington and Swavesey. Contractors appointed to carry out the works might suggest an alternative solution although the District Council would continue to press for the 'Haul Route' as currently proposed. The Panel suggested that this information should be provided to local Parish Councils to avoid further confusion.

It was explained that Borrow Pits were utilised in a variety of ways such as landfill sites and the current option was to fill them with water, creating uses within that environment. It was noted that after the Compulsory Purchase of the land it then had to be offered back to the original landowner. If that offer was declined then HE have a statutory 10 year obligation and the Council was working to have a greater say on how the sites were used in the long-term future beyond that 10 year period.

In conclusion, the Panel accepted the report and remarked on the usefulness of the document as an update. All recommendations to Cabinet were approved by the Panel.

**9. PROGRAMME AND PROJECTS INCLUDING FACING THE FUTURE**

The report on Programmes and Projects was presented to the Panel. The report is intended as an update for Members on changes to the way projects are managed within Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC), including the new role of the Programmes and Projects Manager.

The Panel were informed that all existing projects have been categorised by the Project Select Committee and then allocated them to the most appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Panels. The Facing the Future project is closed, and now features eight projects.

It was explained to the Panel that project documents will now be held within the Sharepoint site, and Councillors can request documents from Officers.

Members queried whether business cases were considered when new projects are approved. It was noted by the Panel that business cases come later in the process of authorisation, and that the diagram appended is a work flow of the initial steps involved in the approval process.

The Panel asked the Programmes and Projects Manager whether Project Managers will receive adequate support in order for them to carry out the work required. It was explained that Project Managers have the support from both Project Members and the Project Board alongside 40 further staff who are now trained in project management. Experienced staff will also act as mentors for the new recruits.

It was noted by the Panel that ideas for projects originate from legislation for example; when a clear need for change and improvement is recognised. The pre-proposition form as appended is now in use, and any new ideas must move forward with the approval of Directors and Heads of Service before it can go further.

The Panel noted and approved the report.

## **10. WORKPLAN STUDIES**

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.

Members question the lack of progress on Waste Collection Policies. It was noted that there is a lack of progress on many of the current Panel activities due to the Operations restructure. There is a second meeting of the Environmental Well-Being Panel taking place on 16th June 2015 where many concerns will be addressed.

Regarding Litter Policies and Practices, Members were informed that the interim Head of Operations will be attending the additional meeting to provide further information on progress.

## **11. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROGRESS**

With the aid of a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel reviewed the progress of its activities since the last meeting.

## **12. SCRUTINY**

The 155th Edition of the Decision Digest was received and noted.

Members discussed the Local Plan and the delays with the final document, querying whether a press release should be issued to the public to make them aware of possible reasons for the delay. The Panel were informed that the expectation from Cabinet Members is that the Local Plan will be ready by the end of the year 2015. There is a requirement that Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) are satisfied that the next date put forward is achievable before that information is released. It was suggested that internal and later external messages should be sent out to reflect this.

Chairman