

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, 8th September 2015.

PRESENT: Councillor T D Sanderson – Chairman.

Councillors I C Bates, Mrs B E Boddington, Mrs S Conboy, J W Davies, Mrs A Dickinson, Mrs L A Duffy, I D Gardener, P Kadewere and R J West.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors D A Giles and K D Wainwright.

25. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 14th July 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

26. MEMBER'S INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest received from those Members that were present.

27. NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Panel received and noted the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which has been prepared by the Executive Leader for the period 1st September to 31st December 2015.

28. CPE (CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT)

The Executive Member for Commercial Activities introduced the Civil Parking Enforcement report to the Panel. It was explained to the Panel that the report revisits the parking enforcement issue, and makes the case for a more lenient view in the interests of economic development; a stricter regime could be seen to penalise local business owners for example. The Panel were informed that in practical terms, the cost of Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) far outweighs the benefits; therefore the recommendation is that it is not taken forward at this stage.

The Interim Head of Operations added that following a lengthy consultancy report, it became clear that although the powers of enforcement and the revenue that it can generate are desirable, a whole new regime of regulations and extensive set up costs would be required. With no solid business case to support CPE, it is advised that the Council do not adopt it and that it instead works with Cambridgeshire County Council on a broader traffic management plan which has the potential to positively affect parking issues locally.

Members of the Panel questioned whether issues faced locally for residential parking have been taken into account. The Panel were told that although residential parking is a separate issue at this stage, there are alternative ways of dealing with these issues than heavy enforcement, and working with CCC and the Planning Department to ensure residents are provided with parking can be more effective in the long term.

A Panel Member asserted that with a lack of Police statistics on unlawful parking, that the issues of local parking had not been considered in full. In response, the Executive Member for Commercial Activities informed the Members that they acknowledge that further information from the Police would have been useful but the cost justification of CPE remains inadequate with the annual overheads unbearable by the Council in the current economic position.

Members suggested that a report to follow with further, more comprehensive information so that the issue can be seen with further clarity would be advantageous, and also that the CPE decision be reviewed in the future. This was agreed and will be added to the recommendations to Cabinet.

The Panel agreed that the report be endorsed by Cabinet, with one abstention.

29. OPERATIONS REVIEW QUARTERLY UPDATE

The Operations Review Quarterly Update was presented to the Panel by the Interim Head of Operations and the Executive Councillor for Operations and Environment. The Panel were informed that the report provides the opportunity for Members to scrutinise the St Ives green spaces and play needs analysis and the new garden waste contamination policy before they are adopted by the Council.

Members of the Panel began discussions on graffiti removal and issues surrounding bin collections. The Panel were informed that particular area problems with graffiti are monitored by the Police, and that the Council are working with the Police to identify offenders. A Panel member suggested that reporting of incidents at particular geographical areas would assist in these investigations; the Interim Head of Operations directed the Members to the Members Contact Form (Appendix 5) which will help to gain some control over the issue with this kind of feedback from Members providing trackable progress.

Regarding the problems associated with residents leaving bins out extended periods of time after collection, Members were informed that the restructure of the Operations Department has meant that there are now resources available to work with residents to prevent this. Progress is also shown in the report concerning weed control and fly posting. The Executive Councillor for Operations and Environment extended his thanks to those Councillors who provided focused, local information which will inform plans for the year ahead.

The Panel were then directed to the Scrutiny section of the report, first considering Greenspaces and Play Needs Analysis for St Ives (Appendix two). The Overview section of the report dealt with town and parish councils; the second section moves on to more detailed work starting with the three market towns in Huntingdonshire and greenspaces therein. The Council are working to be more specific on the needs of local areas and projects that will help that need. The report also details what green spaces there are, what they need, and any gaps in provision.

When considering the information on Play Provision in the area, Members were informed that the needs analysis showed that there is a good level of provision and that these provisions need to be maintained and expanded to other sites. A targeted investment approach is favoured, which allows for affordable future proofing of these sites.

Members of the Panel discussed the council's Garden Waste Policy which has been altered to include a more customer focused approach, which will include solid answers to residents regarding why their bin may have not been collected. This will take the form of digital photography evidence, reasoning and education for those residents who may be repeat offenders.

The report was supported and endorsed by the Panel.

30. INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE MONITORING (QUARTER 1)

The Panel's discussions centred on the planning application performance indicators set out in Appendix B. The Head of Development informed Members that staffing issues have had an impact on the team's ability to meet targets. Vacancies have now been filled, with a permanent Planning Services Manager (Development Management) recently recruited, and new processes have been put in place to improve performance and resilience. These measures are expected to rapidly improve over the coming months.

The Panel noted the report and commended the honest reporting of issues and the steps being made to deliver improvements.

31. 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 Environmental Well-Being.

32. 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.

33. SCRUTINY

The 157th Edition of the Decision Digest was received and noted.

Chairman