

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMY AND GROWTH) held in Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 12th January 2016.

- PRESENT: Councillor T D Sanderson – Chairman.
- Councillors Mrs B E Boddington, J W Davies, Mrs A Dickinson, I D Gardener, D A Giles, S Greenall and K D Wainwright.
- APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors I C Bates, B S Chapman and R J West.
- IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors J D Ablewhite, R C Carter and R Harrison.

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

that Councillor T D Sanderson be elected Chairman of the Panel for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

Councillor T D Sanderson in the Chair.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) held on 8th December 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

4. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

that Councillor A Dickinson be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Panel for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

5. 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 had been prepared by the Executive Leader for the period 1st January 2016 to 30th April 2016.

6. OVERVIEW OF INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARDS

The Panel received a presentation from the Project and Assets Manager on Internal Drainage Boards (IDB). The key points are as follows:

- an IDB is a local public authority that manages water levels and are usually found within areas of special drainage need;
- there are 120 IDBs in England of which 15 are located within the District;
- they have a special responsibility to enhance the ecology of the area;
- in addition to IDBs are the Middle Level Commissioners who are a Navigation Authority. They have spent about £38m to replace the St Germain's Pumping Station;
- IDBs receive funding from drainage rates, special levies on the District Council, Highland Water contribution from the Environment Agency, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs contributions and income from new developments or infrastructure;
- the Council pay IDBs around £394k in drainage rates each year;
- the IDB Board consists of elected members from the ratepayers and Council nominations. They tend to be volunteers so costs are kept to a minimum, and
- the advantage of IDBs are that they are managed by local people who know the area, the problems and want the best solutions.

Following a question regarding dredging and when it is carried out, the Panel were advised that dredging is the responsibility of each individual IDB and as they are proactive dredging would be carried out when it is essential.

The Panel received clarity on the issue of flooding. Members noted that the River Ouse has a large flood plain which is designed to flood when the Ouse bursts its banks however the IDBs want to restrict flooding on farm land to a minimum.

In response to the presentation the Panel discussed the merits of the Flood Prevention Working Group and whether they wanted to pursue further work on IDBs. The Panel,

RESOLVED

- (i) that the Flood Prevention Group be disbanded; and
- (ii) to scrutinise flooding documents when it is deemed necessary.

7. PROGRESS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MARKETING STRATEGY (SIX MONTHLY REPORT)

With the aid of a report by the Economic Development Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) progress on the implementation of the Marketing Strategy was presented to the Panel. In addition to the report Members received a brief history of the Marketing Strategy.

The key points presented to Members were:

- as part of the Economic Growth Plan the Marketing Strategy was developed in order to assist the delivery of the Plan;
- one of the aims of the Plan is to make Huntingdonshire the best place to live, work and invest, and
- part of the strategy is the development of a new website.

Members have been informed that the success of the implementation plan would be measured against three key outputs, which are:

- successful launch of website and initial promotional materials;
- increasing volumes of website traffic; and
- increasing numbers of newsletter subscriptions.

Following a question regarding inclusion of the Enterprise Zone when measuring growth in business rates the Panel was informed that the inclusion of the Enterprise Zone would be useful for the purpose of data analysis and giving a true indication of overall growth.

A concern was raised that contrary to the aim of encouraging workers, the District was turning into a commuter area. In response Members were advised that recruiters have stated that they have vacancies which they were struggling to recruit to. In addition the Council are working with partners EDGE in order to try and convince commuters to remain in the area and take advantage of the employment opportunities.

In response to a question about apprenticeships and how the Council are promoting them the Panel were informed that there was a careers fair in December 2015 with 88 exhibits. Furthermore there are business breakfasts where the Council promotes apprenticeships. In addition to these the Council would like to start providing apprenticeships in the future.

The Economic Development Manager announced that the 'Promote Huntingdonshire' website would be launched on 11th March 2016. Members expressed their wish to see a regularly updating main page to encourage customers to revisit the website.

After a question regarding where the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) fit into the set up Members were told that the LEP is a business led organisation for a large area. The Government requires Local Authorities to consult with the LEP with economic development projects. The Panel,

RESOLVED

to receive updates of the Huntingdonshire Marketing Strategy every six months.

8. OPEN SPACES WATER SAFETY POLICY

With the aid of a report by the Interim Head of Operations (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the report on Open Spaces Water Safety Policy was presented to the Panel. Members were informed that when formulating the policy Officers investigated the best practice of other local authorities.

The Panel was advised that as part of the policy all open water sites would be risk assessed according to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) guidance. It was recommended that RoSPA should train staff within the Environmental Services Section to carry out risk assessments as this was seen as a more sustainable approach to managing the risk of open water sites.

Members noted that it was proposed the Council proactively manage the risk of open water sites by using RoSPA's publication 'Safety in Inland Water Sites' as design guidance so that developers will consider the risks of open water sites when designing and constructing developments.

In response to a question regarding reassessing the risk the Panel noted that the Council would assess high risk open water sites each year and low risk open water sites every three years. Members were advised that legislation places the emphasis on Local Authorities to assess the risk of open water sites and how often those areas should be reassessed.

Following Councillor Mrs B E Boddington's question on the environmental impact the policy could have upon open water sites the Panel was informed that the Council would ensure that the balance between managing the risk to the public and protecting the biodiversity of an area was effective and fair.

Concerns were raised in regarding open water sites within the District where there were not safety measures and it was not clear who is responsible for the maintenance. Members noted that the policy lists the locations of Council owned outdoor open water sites and that £30k would be pump primed to provide equipment and signage as necessary from the site specific risk assessments.

The Panel were pleased with policy as it shows the Council are taking water safety seriously and have indicated that they would like to review the policy at a Panel meeting in 12 months' time. The Panel,

RESOLVED

to recommend to Cabinet that the Open Spaces Water Policy should be endorsed.

(At 8.00pm, during the discussion on this item, Councillor R Harrison left the meeting).

9. STREET CLEANSING - SERVICE SPECIFICATION

With the aid of a report by the Interim Head of Operations (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the report on Street Cleansing Service Specification was presented to the Panel. The Panel were advised that the specification had been developed to be compliant with the Environmental Protection Act.

Members noted that in order to assist the prioritisation of street cleansing, the District had been zoned from one to four and the response times vary according to the zone. If there is a fall in standard from grade A to grade B within zone 1 then the Council will

rectify the standard within five hours however if the standard drops from grade A to grade D then the Council will rectify the standard within one hour. Members noted that maps will be produced in order to clarify the zones and in particular the Town Centre area.

Following a request that the Council should remove all graffiti and not just offensive graffiti Members were advised that the specification makes reference to offensive graffiti as there was a legislative requirement to remove offensive graffiti.

The Panel recognised that although ideally all graffiti should be removed there are different scales of graffiti and it was important that, with the limited resources available, the Council prioritises its response. There was confirmation that the Council would remove graffiti from private land for a fee.

In response to a question on the cleansing of gullies, Members were advised that the Council only cleanse gullies on its own land and that Cambridgeshire County Council cleanse the rest.

After a discussion concerning the enforcement of dog fouling and littering, Members discussed the possibility of a working group to investigate developing an awareness campaign or targeted enforcement work such as littering from a car.

The Panel thought the specification was worthwhile and would like to see regular updates at future Panel meetings. The Panel,

RESOLVED

to recommend to Cabinet that the Street Cleansing Service Specification be endorsed.

10. EARITH, SAWTRY AND STILTON NEEDS ANALYSIS OF OPEN SPACE AND PLAY FACILITIES.

With the aid of a report by the Interim Head of Operations (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the report on Earith, Sawtry and Stilton Needs Analysis of Open Space and Play Functions was presented to the Panel. The Panel were advised that Earith has limited green space provision and as such it is recommended that any future housing development of over 10 houses should include open space provision on site or a contribution to open space provision off site. Play provision was deemed to be adequate for Earith.

Members noted that Sawtry Needs Analysis was carried out upon request of a Member. Sawtry has sufficient green space provision and is well distributed throughout the village. The Panel were advised that open space provision for Sawtry does not need prioritising at the current time. According to policy Sawtry has a deficiency in play provision but this would be met by upgrading St Judith Field.

The Panel had been informed that the Stilton Needs Analysis was carried out as a Member had requested if the Council could provide some open space for parking provision. Green space provision in Stilton is limited and it recommended that any future housing development of over 10 houses should include open space provision

on site or make a contribution to open space off site. The village has play provision however they are in the same location, it is recommended any future housing development should have and appropriate provision of play facilities.

In response to a question regarding consultation with St Neots on their Needs Analysis, Members were advised that it is up to St Neots Town Council who represents them.

11. WORKPLAN STUDIES

The Panel received and noted a report by the Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which contained details of studies being undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels for Communities and Customers and Finance and Performance.

(At 9.06pm, during the discussion on this item, Councillors J D Ablewhite and R C Carter left the meeting).

12. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROGRESS

With the aid of a report by the Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel reviewed the progress of its activities since the last meeting. The Panel agreed not to form an Open Spaces Working Group until the existing policy for open spaces has been presented to the Panel.

The Panel agreed that Councillors J W Davies, I D Gardener and T D Sanderson are to engage with the Head of Community Services on the evolution of the Corporate Enforcement Policy.

(At 9.07pm, during the discussion on this item, Councillor J D Ablewhite returned to the meeting).

Chairman