

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMY AND GROWTH) held in Meeting Room 0.1A and 0.1B, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 14th June 2016.

PRESENT: Councillor R Fuller – In the Chair.

Councillors Mrs B E Boddington, R Fuller,  
L George, D A Giles, B Hyland,  
D R Underwood, K D Wainwright and D Watt.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors D B Dew, I D Gardener and D J Mead.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors D Brown, G J Bull, R Harrison and R B Howe.

#### 4. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

As a result of the absence of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economy and Growth), Councillor R Fuller was elected as Chairman for this meeting only.

**Councillor R Fuller in the Chair.**

#### 5. MINUTES

The minutes for the meetings of the Panel held on 12th April 2016 and 18th May 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### 6. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were received.

#### 7. 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 June 2016 to 30th September 2016.

#### 8. LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP

The Panel received a presentation from Neil Darwin, Chief Executive of the Greater Cambridge and Greater Peterborough (GCGP) Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), on the role of the LEP and its business plan. The key facts were as follows:

- LEPs were established in 2010 following the abolition of regional development agencies. They were required to have a minimum population of around one million and there were to

be no single county boundary LEPs.

- In the GCGP LEP there is a population of 1.4 million.
- The LEP receives £250k from Government and £250k from Local Authority contributions per annum to run its office.
- Funds to run projects are received from European Structural Funds and Local Growth Funds.
- The LEP is held to account primarily by the GCGP Board which consists of: 7 private sector representatives, 5 Local Authority Leaders, 2 Universities, 1 Further Education College representative and a Voluntary Sector representative. In addition to this there is a Leaders Committee which consists of all Local Authority Leaders within the LEP area. Cambridgeshire County Council acts as the responsible authority.
- The LEP has four core objectives: improving the area's infrastructure, supporting the business community to create jobs, improving the skills levels within our communities and ensuring the availability of good quality, affordable housing.
- Benefits to the District include: a total of £14.3m of funding secured for Huntingdonshire; £50m of funding committed to the upgrading of the A14 and an enterprise zone at Alconbury Weald.
- The LEP has a direction for future development which includes building the partnership more solidly, continuing to support business growth and preparing for a possible devolution deal.

Mr Darwin was asked whether the LEP could do anything in relation to the shortage of bricks as this has an impact upon the delivery of affordable housing. In response, Members were informed that the LEP will continue to speak with the private sector to find out the problem with the supply and then work with partners to get the supply moving to satisfy demand.

In response to a question regarding the LEP's Signpost2Skills scheme, Members were informed that the scheme is two years old and was established as a result of businesses not being able to find employees with the right skills. The scheme develops skills and spots talent and is supported by voluntary sector grants. Following up on the question, Mr Darwin was asked if the LEP works with ex-offender programmes. The Panel was informed that the LEP does work with ex-offender programmes but not as much as it could do.

Mr Darwin clarified that the LEP receives £500k per annum to run its team and that funding to run projects comes from the European Structural Funds and Local Growth Funds. Members noted that if Britain votes to leave the European Union it would not affect the funding received during the current cycle of funding.

Following a question regarding the LEP's plans for St Neots, Mr Darwin confirmed that the LEP recognises that St Neots is an important settlement within the District and that they await to hear what the community of St Neots wants.

With regards to internet infrastructure, the Panel heard that although the LEP recognises that this is a problem for some businesses, too

much control remains with the telecommunications companies. The national LEP association is attempting to apply pressure on them to act to improve the infrastructure.

The Panel asked whether the LEP is working to help implement Huntingdonshire's policies and priorities or if Huntingdonshire assists with implementing the LEP's policies and priorities. Mr Darwin responded that it is a partnership approach with both parties working collaboratively to ensure the achievement of both organisations' policies and priorities.

A Member asked how the LEP makes decisions on which projects to prioritise from across the geographical area it covers. In response, the Panel was informed that the LEP has developed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with projects prioritised according to an evidence base. Mr Darwin stated that the LEP wants to continue the use of MOUs throughout the area.

Following a request, Mr Darwin confirmed that the Panel would be able to view the LEP's written business plan.

*(At 7.44pm, after the consideration of this item, Councillor D Brown left the meeting and did not return).*

## **9. HUNTINGDONSHIRE LOCAL PLAN TO 2036 QUARTERLY UPDATE AND INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING UPDATE**

With the aid of a report by the Head of Development (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), updates on the Huntingdonshire Local Plan To 2036 Quarterly Update and Infrastructure Planning Update were presented to the Panel.

Members were informed that the Council has received clarity in regards to what the Government means by adopting a written local plan by March 2017 and that the Council's existing Core Strategy meets the requirement. This therefore means that the March 2017 deadline does not apply to the District.

However, the Panel was advised that, as the Core Strategy pre-dates the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework in 2012, a later deadline of March 2018 would have to be met.

The Panel noted that the Council has a timetable for the Local Plan but that the timescales have slipped because of a delay with the revalidation of the Cambridge Sub-Regional Model (CSRM) traffic model by consultants for Cambridgeshire County Council. The CSRM was expected to be complete by May 2016 but is now expected to be complete at the end of June 2016 and it will then require further checking.

The Panel was asked to consider two options in relation to the CSRM. Option A would involve continuing to work on the Local Plan using the old CSRM model. Option B is to pause work on the Local Plan until the County Council has provided the revalidated CSRM.

In response to a question regarding the Environment Agency, the Panel was informed that the Council is awaiting the Lower Great

Ouse Flood Model. Members noted that the Council is engaging with the Environment Agency at a senior level in order to get the model completed.

A Member asked how the Local Plan would affect specific locations as well as the Market Town Strategy. In response, Members were advised that the Council requires a revalidated CSRM model in order to predict what would happen in individual towns and villages throughout the District.

Members were reminded that the CSRM helps to establish what the provision of roads should be rather than the maintenance of roads. It was asked if some thought could be given to future proofing the provision of road lanes and the Panel was advised that the CSRM would determine how many lanes should be provided.

Following a question regarding the consideration of the flood risk at the northern end of the District, the Panel noted that the Environment Agency is a statutory consultee and if the Council was not following the advice from the Environment Agency then there are extra steps that would be required to be taken.

The Panel agreed that, out of the two options presented to them, the Cabinet should endorse Option B to wait for the revalidated CSRM to be made available. Members noted that it would not benefit the Council to work with a flawed model as the outcomes from the model would also be flawed. This is what would happen if Option A was adopted.

Members agreed to advise the Cabinet that they believe that pressure should continue to be applied to the County Council to ensure the revalidation of the CSRM is made a priority as any further delay would have a greater detrimental impact upon the delivery of the Local Plan. The Panel

#### RESOLVED

- 1) to recommend to the Cabinet that option B should be endorsed; and
- 2) to invite Officers from the County Council to the July 2016 meeting of the Panel to explain why there is a delay with the revalidation of the CSRM.

*(At 8.13pm, after the consideration of this item, Councillors G Bull, R Harrison and R B Howe left the meeting and did not return).*

#### **10. WORK PLAN 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 Environment and Performance and Customers.

Members noted that the Litter Policies and Practices Working Group and the Waste Collection Policies Working Group had moved to the

remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Communities and Environment).

**11. 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 noted that the Huntingdonshire Infrastructure Business Plan is tied in with the Local Plan and work can't be completed until the Local Plan has been progressed.

Chairman