

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT) held in Zest Cafe, One Leisure St Neots, Barford Road, St Neots, PE19 2SA on Tuesday, 1st November 2016.

PRESENT: Councillor T D Alban – Chairman.
Councillors B S Chapman, J W Davies,
Mrs A Dickinson, D A Giles, T Hayward,
P Kadewere and L R Swain.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs A Donaldson, D Harty and Mrs P A Jordan.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors R C Carter and R J West.

42. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Communities and Environment) held on 4th October 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

43. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor T Alban declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to Minute Number 46 as an employee of a company that engages in commercial activities with Peterborough Hospital as well as with Addenbrookes Hospital.

Councillor B S Chapman declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to Minute Number 49 as a Cambridgeshire County Councillor.

Councillor D A Giles declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to Minute Number 49 as a Cambridgeshire County Councillor.

44. 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 November 2016 to 29th February 2017.

45. ONE LEISURE ST NEOTS

The Chairman thanked the One Leisure St Neots Facility Manager and his team for hosting the Panel and for the guided tour of the facility.

A Member asked about the disconnect between the dry side and wet side of the Leisure Centre. In response the Panel was told that the team have been proactive and have been good at attracting business

despite competition from other leisure centres in the town.

Following a suggestion of piping hot water from the power station to the pool, the Panel were told that the scheme was looked at extensively by the Council however the cost of installing the infrastructure would be millions of pounds. There is no guarantee of the price set by the power station for the supply of the water or if that price would be maintained. In addition, there have been discussions that the power station could close.

The Panel were informed that as part of the Re:Fit programme, the Leisure Centre is due to have solar panels installed. Members were reminded that the Re:Fit programme looks at energy efficient measures across all the One Leisure centres.

In response to a question regarding the competition the Leisure Centre faces, Members were informed that the Leisure Centre did suffer from a loss of customers, however some customers have returned to One Leisure as competitors have started transferring customers off their introductory price rate onto the standard price rate.

Members were informed following a question regarding the GP referral scheme that the Council still provide the scheme and that One Leisure Active Lifestyles manages it.

Following a question in regards to introducing a surcharge on One Leisure customers from outside the District, Members were informed that One Leisure now creates a surplus and therefore it does not cost the ratepayer anything. In addition it was noted that by allowing customers from outside the District to use One Leisure facilities it does not cost the ratepayer as much as it would do if out of District customers were not allowed to use the Leisure Centres.

46. HINCHINGBROOKE AND PETERBOROUGH HOSPITALS MERGER

Members were informed that following the consideration of Full Business Case for the merger of the Trusts running Hinchingsbrooke and Peterborough and Stamford Hospitals by the Cabinet at its meeting on 20th October 2016, the Panel had been asked to convene a Task and Finish Group to undertake a critical analysis of the Full Business Case, in order to formulate a proposal to the Cabinet as to whether the Council should support the Merger and its suggested response.

The Chairman proposed, and the Panel agreed, that a Task and Finish Group would not be convened and that Members would draw conclusions and draft a letter to be sent to the Chairman of the Hinchingsbrooke Health Care NHS Trust. The Chairman added that the Panel had three options: support the merger (either fully or reluctantly), do not support the merger or do not support the merger but register no objections.

The Chairman opened the debate by stating that following the special meeting on 12th October 2016, he could not support the merger but he could not object to it either as there is no other plan on the table.

One Member suggested that the Council should reject the merger as the Trusts do not have an alternative in the scenario that the merger fails. In addition, the Chief Executive of Hinchingsbrooke Healthcare NHS Trust, Lance McCarthy, did not commit to the preservation of services at the Hinchingsbrooke site.

A Member stated that they believe the Panel should not be dealing with the issue as a Council response should come from the Cabinet and signed by the Executive Leader of the Council. The Executive Councillor for Environment, Street Scene and Operations responded that the Cabinet believes that the Panel should take ownership of the issue as they had heard from Lance McCarthy twice and had received the evidence to make a judgement.

The point was raised that Members were informed that the merger is to overcome financial difficulties as well as making the Trust a more attractive proposition for consultants when recruiting. It was suggested that senior staff could be appointed through a staff sharing arrangement and the contract written in a way that would guarantee the consultant hours at Hinchingsbrooke. In regards to the finances the income from the health campus would go to the merged Trust and Hinchingsbrooke would not fully benefit from the income.

The Panel noted that the merged Trust's Council of Governors would have a 'greater influence' from the north of the area. The Panel were uncomfortable with the idea that the interests of Hinchingsbrooke could be overlooked as there is a potential for the north to 'outvote' Huntingdonshire. Members fear that this would affect all residents but particularly those who depend on Hinchingsbrooke.

A Member suggested that the Panel should not make decisions on the clinical sustainability of Hinchingsbrooke but focus on the governance arrangements. The Member added that the Council shouldn't support the acquisition without the governance of Hinchingsbrooke being protected. The Panel,

RESOLVED

- 1) that the acquisition cannot be supported by Huntingdonshire District Council due to the absence of sufficient balance in the governance arrangements in protecting the interests of the residents of Huntingdonshire, and
- 2) that a letter is written to the Chairman of Hinchingsbrooke Healthcare NHS Trust, Alan Burns, explaining why the Council cannot support the acquisition and explain other concerns expressed by the Panel.

47. STREET CLEANSING SERVICE SPECIFICATION IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

With the aid of a report by the Operations Manager (Environmental Services) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Street Cleansing Service Specification Implementation Update was presented to the Panel.

Members were reminded that the Street Cleansing Service

Specification was previously scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economy and Growth) and the report highlights how the service is performing. The update report will be presented to the Panel each year.

The Panel was informed that the service is not cleansing the A1/A14 corridor but is however cleansing the slip roads. The Council have made the decision as the road would have to be closed for the safety of staff. Any closure would have to occur at night at a cost of £20k per night and the staff resources would be taken from the day shift.

Members were informed that the metal bins are to be replaced with plastic bins and the Council are looking at getting all the bins from the same company so that replacements can be standardised.

Another development is the creation of a team who will work on ad-hoc issues and respond to customer complaints.

A question was raised in regards to Church Street, St Ives where the leaves fall but can't be swept as there is parking around the clock. In response Members were informed that the Council can work with the County Council to close the road in order to sweep it even if it might be through the use of a dust pan and brush.

In response to a question regarding whether it was the Highways Agency's responsibility to cleansing the A1/A14, the Panel were told that it was not, however the Council would have to go through the Highways Agency in order to closed the road as otherwise it would not be safe for staff to work.

The new street cleansing employee in St Neots was complimented by a Member, especially his willingness to take down fly posters. In response to the question could fly posters could be taken off street furniture, the Panel were informed that they couldn't as the street furniture are County Council assets and therefore it is their responsibility for removing the fly posters and graffiti off their buildings and assets.

Following a conversation in regards to the removal of fly posters and graffiti from County Council assets, the Council would remove them so long as the County Council issue a statement to state that the Council are allowed to remove them and issue a wavier on any damage caused by the removal.

A conversation ensued about the need for more bins to be installed however the majority of the Panel agreed that more education is the key. The Executive Councillor for Environment, Street Scene and Operations stated that one of the campaigns the service is planning to carry out focuses on litter.

In response to a question regarding A boards outside of shops, Members were told that it was a planning issue and any questions should go to the Head of Development.

Following a question, the Panel were informed that weed control is part of the service's remit and have bought a weed ripper which gets into the gullies and rips out the detritus. In addition, Members were

informed that the removal of fly tipping material from the highway is the responsibility of the Council.

48. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the press and public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) and information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees.

49. CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS AND POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME OF HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Operations on the Contractual Arrangements and potential Improvement Programme of Hinchingbrooke Country Park. The Panel agreed that the Country Park is a good facility and that a series of improvement works would increase the recreational value of the Park. In addition, Members agreed that the improvement programme can only be implemented so long as the contractual arrangements have been finalised.

In order to assist with the Council's contractual negotiations with Cambridgeshire County Council, the Panel agreed to recommend to Cabinet a further point.

(At 9.20pm, during the consideration of this item, Councillor B S Chapman left the meeting and did not return.)

50. RE-ADMITTANCE OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the press and public be re-admitted to the meeting.

51. REPRESENTATION ON EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

With the aid of a report by the Democratic Services Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Representation on External Organisations report was presented to the Panel. In response to a question regarding non-attendance by some of the Council's representatives and the ability of the Council to send a substitute, it was noted that some organisations will only allow a nominated substitute.

Following a complaint by a Member that some representatives were not providing feedback, the Panel were informed the Member nominated as the Council's representative on that organisation has a responsibility to report back.

The Panel thanked all the Members who have reported back.

52. 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 Economy and Growth and Performance and Customers.

53. 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.

In relation to the Future of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, Paxton Pits, Godmanchester Nursery and Public Rights of Way, that at a meeting of the Ouse Valley Way Management Group the County Council officer who holds the budget for rights of way maintenance has agreed to attend a Panel meeting in February or March 2017.

Chairman