

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (PERFORMANCE AND CUSTOMERS) held in Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 2nd November 2016.

- PRESENT: Councillor M F Shellens – Chairman.
- Councillors Mrs B E Boddington,
Mrs A Dickinson, Mrs L A Duffy, S Greenall,
Mrs R E Mathews, Mrs D C Reynolds,
Mrs S L Taylor, R G Tuplin, R J West and
J E White.
- APOLOGY: An apology for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors P L E Bucknell.
- IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors D Brown, G J Bull, S Cawley, R B Howe and D M Tysoe.

28. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Customers) held on 7th September 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

29. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were received.

30. 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 28th February 2017.

31. HDC PEER REVIEW

With the aid of a report by the Managing Director (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Corporate Peer Challenge report was presented to the Panel. The Executive Councillor for Strategic Partnerships and Shared Services introduced the report to Members.

The Panel were informed that the Council have produced an Action Plan to act upon the recommendations of the Corporate Peer Challenge. The Executive Councillor for Strategic Partnerships and Shared Services has committed to attend further Panel meetings to give updated on the Action Plan.

Following a question on is the Council going to provide a list of actions that are not going to be completed, Members were informed that the information will be made available to them.

After a Member raised the question in relation to timescales, it was confirmed that the word 'immediate' means before end of the year.

In regards to action 3d and the making assets count programme, the Panel were informed that the programme has been paused until Devolution has been resolved. In response to a follow up question Members were informed that the programme had been paused before the emergence of Devolution.

Members were reminded that in relation to action 3a and the contracts awarded to the voluntary sector, the Voluntary Sector Funding Working Group looked at the issue extensively and made recommendations to the Cabinet who agreed the majority of the recommendations. The main recommendation which was agreed was to split the funding between the advice and infrastructure sectors.

The Panel wanted to emphasise in relation to recommendation three that the Council should secure benefits for the community and not just benefits for the Council. Members were advised that the Council will work with Town and Parish Councils to secure benefits for the community.

In relation to action 5a and the Council's relationship with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), the Executive Leader of the Council stated that the relationship was previously not good however he and the Executive Councillor for Business, Enterprise and Skills have worked to improve the relationship with the LEP. The Council and the LEP are about to undergo a process of establishing a Memorandum of Understanding which will focus efforts on particular infrastructure projects.

A Member raised a concern that the perception is that smaller businesses in the towns have been side-lined and that the Town Councils have not always communicated with the small businesses. The Executive Councillor for Business, Enterprise and Skills responded by informing the Panel that an additional action will be added (named 5b) which includes small businesses.

In response to a question on the NNDR retention when making commercial property investments and whether those investments could be within the District, Members were informed that the Council is unsure how much NNDR it will receive as a result of planned alterations in the next few years.

In respect to making commercial property investments within the District, the Council are open to making investments within the District however it would be contrary to the advice given at the time of the formation of the Commercial Investment Strategy which urged the Council to look externally and not just internally.

The Panel were informed that the formal transformation strategy and implementation plan would be ready for launch by December 2016.

Members were advised that the monitoring of the Action Plan would be carried out by the Project Management Governance Board but a progress report would be brought to a future meeting of the Panel.

32. INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE REPORT 2016/17 - QUARTER 2

With the aid of a report by the Head of Resources and the Corporate Team Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Integrated Performance Report 2016/17 Quarter 2 was presented to the Panel.

In response to a question regarding how does the Council want to be judged on homelessness, Members were informed that there are a number of targets that the Council are measured on in respect to homelessness with the emphasis on how effective the Council are in addressing the issue. The example given was that last year the Council achieved 250 aversions of homelessness.

The Panel were informed that in response to the time taken to complete minor Disabled Facilities Grants jobs a report by the Home Improvement Agency will be submitted to a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Communities and Environment) once the actions have been reviewed by the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy, Housing and Infrastructure and the Head of Development.

Following a question regarding the overspend in ICT, Members were informed that a review of the benefits of the ICT shared service had been undertaken as well as an impact assessment of service mergers. It is unknown whether the increase in cost is temporary or permanent however the review will be able to establish that.

The Panel was informed that the reduction of the Impressions direct debit line is due to a decrease in membership. The membership fee has been unbundled and a number of Impressions customers have moved to other packages. In addition the budget has been affected as a result of an increase in maintenance costs. The Maintenance supplied by the third party contractor was poor and as such the Council has now entered into a contract with another party.

Members were informed that One Leisure has experienced competition from other competitors who have offered introductory membership fees and as a result Membership at One Leisure has reduced. Members noted that some competitors open longer hours than One Leisure and could be attracting customers who work shifts.

In response to a question regarding placing of Mobile Homes at Alconbury and Wyton to help assist the homelessness problem, the Panel was informed that the Council are reviewing all options in finding suitable housing solutions for homeless people.

A concern was raised that housing developers are not fully developing sites in order to avoid building affordable housing, in response the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy, Housing and Infrastructure stated that the Council are reviewing the situation and a policy is in development.

Following a question on how closely does the Council work with the County Council in respect to housing unaccompanied children, the Panel were informed that this area is a County Council function

however the Council does have dialogue with the County Council on where the unaccompanied children can be located.

In response to a question in regards to Key Action 11 on when and what Council owned assets are transferred to the community, the Panel were informed that the Council are constantly looking at opportunities to transfer assets.

A Member asked, in relation to Key Action 34, has consideration been given to raising Council Tax, the Panel were informed that a preliminary budget will be done by December, no decision has been made however it has been considered.

In response to a query on Key Action 35, the Panel were informed that there will be no Zero Based Budgeting exercise this year as the focus has been on the transformation programme. There will however be a line by line assessment of budgets this year.

The Panel queried the time taken to process changes of circumstances for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support (Performance Indicator 31), however were told that due to operational issues the amount of time taken to process changes of circumstances would mean that it could not be done any quicker.

A discussion ensued regarding Performance Indicator 37 and it was explained that the total number of sickness days lost as indicated by the report is a rolling total.

Following a question is the red status on Performance Indicator 43 a concern, it was explained that the recording of complaints is a new indicator, however the recording of complaints is better than what was done previously.

When discussing the Project Performance, Members were informed that the lease for One Leisure St Neots has been extended which means that the Sport England investment on the 3G sports pitch can now proceed.

Members were informed that the Re:Fit programme has been reduced to take into account the work at the Leisure Centres that do not have long left on their leases. The work is due to commence in November 2016.

The Panel were informed that regarding the iMet project, the Council are not the lead partner, therefore if the project is delayed then there is not anything the Council can do. The project was run by the Huntingdonshire Regional College however since the college has merged it is now run by the Cambridge Regional College. The project is scheduled to be complete for the beginning of the 2017/18 academic year.

It was explained to Members that the Building Access Control is a project that should have been carried out at the beginning of the shared services contract as it allows all employees working for Huntingdonshire District Council to access the building.

A Member noted that they thought it was a bit ambitious to complete

the One Leisure Huntingdon Changing Facilities project by 31st March 2017 if an architect has only just been appointed. The Panel were informed that due to the limited time left on the lease the Council are unwilling to invest in a site which it won't potentially see the benefit of. It was confirmed that the project won't be complete by 31st March 2017.

The Panel was informed by the Head of Resources that the Council is in a good revenue position. In addition the income is improved by the £1m expected, due to the additional business rates from the renewable energy schemes.

Members noted the Council has overspent on Document Centre by £30k but were assured that work is ongoing so that an accurate budget forecast can be made.

In response to a question on debt, Members were informed that the vast majority of the debt has been collected and that if the collection of debt is professional then the cost of collecting the debt is not excessive.

(At 8.29pm, during the consideration of this item, Councillors A Dickinson and D C Reynolds left the meeting and did not return.)

(At 8.32pm, during the consideration of this item, Councillors G J Bull and D M Tysoe left the meeting and did not return.)

(At 8.43pm, during the consideration of this item, Councillors D Brown and S Cawley left the meeting and did not return.)

33. TREASURY MANAGEMENT SIX MONTH PERFORMANCE REVIEW

With the aid of a report by the Head of Resources (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Treasury Management Six Month Performance Review was presented to the Panel. Members noted that during the last quarter the Council have made two investments under the Commercial Investment Strategy.

(At 8.55pm, during the consideration of this item, Councillor R B Howe left the meeting and did not return.)

34. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (PERFORMANCE AND CUSTOMERS) MEETING CYCLE

With the aid of a report by the Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Customers) Meeting Cycle was presented to the Panel.

One Member suggested that additional meetings would be useful as fewer meetings could lead to longer meetings which can mean that Members get tired towards the end of the meeting which could result in box ticking and not the full consideration of a report.

Another Member added that they would rather have fewer and potentially longer meetings as more meetings would mean extra

travelling costs. In addition the time spent travelling to and from the Council would mean that they may as well stay an extra hour at the few meetings the Panel has.

The Panel agreed that they saw no merit for an extra five meetings per Municipal Year. The Panel,

RESOLVED

to retain the current number of meetings at five per municipal year but reserve the right to call additional meetings as an when required.

35. REPORT ON EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

With the aid of a report by the Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the report on the Representation on External Organisations was presented to the Panel.

A Member asked that if a representative cannot attend a meeting of the organisation then couldn't another Member go instead. It was noted that some organisations won't allow for alternative representatives and that the nominated Member would have to attend. Members were informed that in the particular incident referred to, an officer of the Council was able to attend in the representative's place.

36. 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 Economy and Growth.

37. 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 made no decision in regards to the items on their work programme.

Chairman