

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (CUSTOMERS AND PARTNERSHIPS) held in Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Thursday, 7th February 2019.

PRESENT: Councillor T D Alban – Chairman.

Councillors B S Banks, R E Bellamy,
S Bywater, S J Criswell, J W Davies,
Ms A Diaz, K I Prentice, Mrs S Smith,
Mrs J Tavener and D R Underwood.

APOLOGY: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor B S Chapman.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors J A Gray and J M Palmer.

52. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10th January 2019 was approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

53. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor D R Underwood declared a non-statutory disclosable interest in relation to Minute Number 58 as he is the Chairman of Godmanchester Town Council's Task Group.

54. NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Panel received and noted the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions (a copy of which has been appended in the Minute Book) which has been prepared by the Executive Leader for the period 1st February 2019 to 31st May 2019.

55. LUMINUS GROUP

Luminus' Managing Director, Mr Nigel Finney and Head of Development, Mr John Walton was in attendance to provide the Panel with an update of the merger and inform them of their development plans. Mr Finney apologised that Luminus' Chairman, Mr Mike Forrest, was unable to attend.

Members were informed that, in March, it will be 12 months since Luminus merged with Places for People. Compliance is now at 100%, the Senior Leadership Team has been restructured and a new Board has been appointed. Luminus have launched a new resident engagement strategy and a new Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

In addition, Luminus has been actively collaborating with Places for People. Places for People can provide a range of repair services. The repairmen are managed by the Property Management Division of

Places for People but work under the Luminus branding.

As a result of the merger, Luminus are now in a position to pursue a development plan. Originally Luminus were forecast to lose £1.6m in March 2019 but, as a result of the merger and the changes they bring, Luminus are now forecast to break even.

In introducing Luminus' development strategy, Mr Walton informed the Panel that Luminus has recognised that they have not developed enough in the last two years but that they intend to develop 1000 homes in the next four to five years. In 2019/20, the intention is to start developing 100 new homes. Luminus intends to use the partnership that Places for People have with Homes England to access additional funds.

Mr Walton informed Members that Luminus will adopt a blended approach of tenures on sites and that the main aim is to provide affordable homes but will use private sale to offset the cost. In terms of rural affordability, Luminus are involved with a Community Land Trust in Great Staughton. As for modular constructions, Luminus will use them to help unlock unviable sites therefore speeding up the rate of delivery.

Following a question on Eden Place Sheltered Accommodation in St Ives and the need for more schemes like it, the Panel was informed that, at Eden Place, there are currently 5 vacancies out of 55. Members were informed that Cambridgeshire County Council identified a need for 10 schemes across the county and that currently on two have been built. However, whereas Luminus can provide the bricks and mortar, if there is no funding for the care then the scheme would not work.

Members were reassured that, when it comes to trees, Luminus works closely with the Council and looks to save as many trees as possible. When developing, Luminus aims to plant more trees than they take away.

In responding to a concern about tenants with disabilities, Mr Finney stated that Luminus' policy for installing aids and adaptations has strengthened and for more expensive adaptations Luminus works with the Home Improvement Agency. If Luminus are made aware of someone vulnerable then they will do what is required as Luminus have specialist support officers who support tenants who require assistance.

Mr Finney informed the Panel, following a question on internet access, that Luminus are rolling out Wifi across its sheltered accommodation but it is unable to provide internet for individual tenants. In addition, Luminus will continue to provide a face to face service for tenants who prefer to interact via that method.

A discussion ensued regarding garage sites and the provision of lighting on those sites. Mr Finney informed Members that Luminus has twenty garage sites that are unviable. In respect to lighting, that is an additional service beyond the capacity of Luminus, however Luminus can provide individual garage tenants with security lighting in return for a service charge.

Members were informed that Luminus operate the Hope Project which is a scheme that helps people get back into work. Currently Luminus use Hope for cleaning and gardening on their sites.

Following a question on whether Luminus supports care leavers, the Panel was informed that at present Luminus do not, however if there is funding to support such a scheme then Luminus would be open to being involved.

When questioned about the 100 new homes in the next 12 months, Mr Walton confirmed that Luminus are on target to have started the development of 100 homes but that approximately only 77 will be completed. The location of the homes will be split amongst the towns and villages.

In regards to the consideration of social value, Luminus confirmed that they do consider social value in respect to large maintenance contracts and construction contracts.

The Panel thanked Mr Finney and Mr Walton for their attendance.

(At 7.09pm, during the discussion of this item, Councillor J A Gray entered the meeting.)

56. INCREASING SOCIAL VALUE IN CONTRACTS

With the aid of a report by the Procurement Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) increasing social value in contracts was presented to the Panel.

The Panel was informed that by getting a policy it raises the Council's credibility on the issue.

A Member questioned how the Council are going to be transparent and prescriptive in regards to implementation. The Panel was informed that the Council will try to put a financial value on the social value element.

Concern was raised with how the Council will be able to monitor that a company will implement the social value element of their contract. It was explained that part of the process will be a face to face meeting with the company, where they will explain what they meant in their application. Reassurance was given that a company will be monitored against each element.

A Member asked if the Council would consider a contract which stated that a company will stop using single use plastics. In response, clarification was given that the Procurement Manager will assess and score appropriately what has been written in each application.

It was confirmed that it is not compulsory for companies to inform the Council of any social value in their contract, however the element is scored.

The Panel was supportive of the policy and advises Cabinet that they approve the recommendations contained within the report.

57. 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).

58. GODMANCHESTER NURSERY UPDATE

With the aid of a presentation from the Executive Councillor for Partnerships and Well-Being and the Head of Operations, the Godmanchester Nursery Update was presented to the Panel.

As background information, Members were informed of the current offering on the site, the challenges and the options available. Members were also informed that the Council is working closely with Godmanchester Town Council.

The Panel supported the preferred option and recommends that the Council continues to collaborate with Godmanchester Town Council on the issue.

59. RE-ADMITTANCE OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

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

60. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

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 Work Programme was presented to the Panel.

Chairman