

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (PERFORMANCE AND GROWTH) held in Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 4th December 2018.

PRESENT: Councillor D B Dew – Chairman.

Councillors S J Corney, Dr P L R Gaskin, J Neish, S Wakeford and D J Wells.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors J C Cooper-Marsh, D A Giles, M S Grice, K P Gulson and J P Morris.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor R Fuller.

37. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6th November 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

38. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were received.

39. 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 December 2018 to 31st March 2019.

(At 7.03pm, during the consideration of this item, Councillor D J Wells entered the meeting.)

40. USE OF SPECIAL URGENCY PROVISIONS VERBAL UPDATE - COMMERCIAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY ASSET

The Panel was informed that the Chairman of the Panel approved that an urgent item could be considered at Cabinet without prior Overview and Scrutiny.

41. RURAL SETTLEMENT LIST - BUSINESS RATES

With the aid of a report by the Revenue and Benefits Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Rural Settlement List – Business Rates was presented to the Panel.

It was explained that as the population of Hemingford Grey now exceeds 3,000 and that this means rural rate relief would no longer be applied to qualifying businesses if the parish as a whole was considered to be one settlement. If Hemingford Grey was split into

two areas, the population would remain beneath 3,000 and rural rate relief could be awarded.

A question was raised as to why other larger areas could not be divided for the purpose of obtaining rural rate relief. The Panel was informed that the principle behind rural rate relief is to ensure that key amenities continue to be available in rural areas where economic conditions could put them at risk. This is why businesses applying for rural rate relief have to be located in a rural location and be of a certain size and type.

In response to a question about the splitting Hemingford Grey for the purpose of rural rate relief, Members were informed that the split would be beneficial and that the process would not need to be repeated for a while.

42. 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. In addition, draft scoping documents for task and finish work on affordable housing policy and improving skills were also presented to the Panel.

The Executive Councillor for Housing, Planning and Economic Development and the Planning Service Manager (Policy) were in attendance to address the Panel in relation to the draft scoping document on affordable housing policy. After a thorough discussion Members decided that the scoping document should be amended to reflect the emphasis on rural exception sites and investigating ways of accelerating the delivery of affordable housing. The amended scoping document will be presented to the Panel at their meeting in January.

In addressing the improving skills scoping document, Members were satisfied with the document and agreed to invite Mr John T Hill from the Combined Authority to discuss the Combined Authority's skills strategy once it is published. Members will then invite the Executive Councillor for Housing, Planning and Economic Development and the Economic Development Manager to discuss what the Council's objectives are.

Chairman