

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (CUSTOMERS AND PARTNERSHIPS) held as a remote meeting via Zoom on Thursday, 5th November 2020

PRESENT: Councillor D M Tysoe – Chairman.

Councillors T D Alban, B S Banks, S J Criswell, J W Davies, Ms A Diaz, Mrs A Dickinson, D A Giles and Mrs S R Wilson.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs S Smith and Mrs J Tavener.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Mrs M L Beuttell and J Neish.

19 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8th October was approved as a correct record by the Panel.

20 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were received.

21 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 had been prepared by the Executive Leader for the period 1st November 2020 to 28th February 2021.

22 HUNTINGDONSHIRE TREE STRATEGY REVIEW

Consideration was given to a report by the Arboricultural Officer, Ms Tamsin Miles (a copy of which has been appended in the Minute Book) in which the Huntingdonshire Tree Strategy Review was presented to the Panel.

In introducing the report, the Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Tree Strategy Working Group, comprising of Councillors Banks, Davies and Tavener, for their input in the development of the Strategy. In addition, the Executive Councillor stated that a significant amount of effort had been expended by Officers in producing the Strategy.

The Panel commended the Tree Strategy and echoed the words of the Executive Councillor. Members thanked Officers and the Overview and Scrutiny Tree Strategy Working Group for their time and effort in conducting the review and producing the updated Tree Strategy.

In discussing the Strategy, Councillor Giles commented that the Strategy did not mention the species Black Poplar, which used to be common in Huntingdonshire.

In response, Officers confirmed that the Council was planting Black Poplars. It was suggested that there should be a reference to the Black Poplar within the Strategy.

Although not specifically mentioned by the Tree Strategy, Councillor Davies suggested that when Members were informed of planning applications or decisions it would be beneficial to identify any matters in relation to trees. He added that this would assist Town and Parish Councils when considering planning applications.

Councillor Wilson stated that the Council should focus on acquiring the resources in order to fulfil the aims of the Action Plan. The Panel noted that a number of actions which required grants or other additional resources to be completed. Councillor Wilson further stated that the actions should be prioritised so that the ones deemed most important were completed first.

The Panel commented that the table on page 45 used the old Ward boundaries. It was recommended that the Strategy should be altered to refer to the current the Ward boundaries to ensure it contained up to date information.

Councillor Wilson queried whether the statistics within the Strategy relating to the number of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) issued was a cumulative total. Having noted that it was, it was recommended that the number of TPOs are issued year on year or during a particular 5-year period should be presented. This would give a better reflection how much time and resources were expended per year on the protection and preservation of trees throughout the District.

Councillor Wilson commented that tree planting and the installation of street furniture on new build estates were not planned as effectively as they could be. However, the Panel was informed that the new Urban Design Manual would better address these matters in the future.

Councillor Giles commented that he found the wording on pages 87, 88 and 89 quite negative. It was, however, noted that these pages covered pruning limitations and explained the situations where Huntingdonshire District Council would not prune trees. The Panel

RESOLVED

that, subject to the comments outlined above, the Cabinet be recommended to approve the Huntingdonshire District Council Tree Strategy and Action Plan.

23 LITTER MINIMISATION UPDATE

With the aid of a presentation by the Litter Minimisation Officer (a copy of which has been appended in the Minute Book) the Litter Minimisation Update was presented to the Panel.

Following the presentation, the Chairman commended Officers on the progress that had been made. In addition, the Chairman praised the bulky waste service but questioned whether the Council were promoting it enough. In response, the

Litter Minimisation Officer stated that surveys had been undertaken and it had been concluded that more promotion of the service was required.

Councillor Giles welcomed the presentation and queried whether the message on how to stop fly tipping could be issued alongside the Christmas bin collection. The reasoning for this was that a significant number of residents did not use social media, but every household had a bin. In response, the Litter Minimisation Officer agreed to investigate the idea.

Discussion moved onto the reduction of the number of litter bins in the town centres. Councillor Wilson asked if this had led to more litter being dropped between each bin. In response, the Litter Minimisation Officer stated that generally there had not been an increase, however there was sometimes an increase in certain locations at the weekend.

Councillor Banks asked what criteria was used when deciding the location of the new larger bins. In response, the Panel was informed that an Officer would undertake a site visit to assess the location and footfall. The criteria considered included whether the bin would fit in and whether there was disabled access.

Picking up on a comment made during the presentation, the Chairman asked about the level of confidence Officers had in the data on litter. The Litter Minimisation Officer stated there had been a concerted effort by the team to fill in paperwork and record data. This meant the data was reliable and could safely be used to justify decisions taken. In addition, it was confirmed that the data was forwarded onto the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

The Chairman asked whether the Council was satisfied that it was as easy as possible for communities to carry out their own litter picks. The Litter Minimisation Officer responded by stating that the current procedure balanced ease of use and the management of equipment. Throughout the process the Council knew what equipment it had and where it was.

24 STRATEGIC REVIEW OF MARKET SERVICES - PROJECT OVERVIEW

Consideration was given to a report by the Operations Manager for Parking and Markets (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) in which the project overview for the Strategic Review of Market Services was presented to the Panel.

In introducing the report the Executive Councillor for Operations and Environment stated that the Council operated traditional markets but did not have a Strategy and that it was proposed to establish a task and finish group to develop and produce a Markets Strategy. Councillor Dickinson expressed support for the fact that a strategic review would be undertaken.

The Chairman questioned whether the remit contained in the scoping document was fixed. In response, the Panel was informed that if an issue arose which had not previously been considered then it could be included within the scope of the strategic review.

In response to questions on the expected timescales, the Operations Manager for Parking and Markets stated that he was confident that all the timescales would be met. The Panel

RESOLVED

- 1) that the approach and aims as set out in the Strategic Review of Markets Services scoping document be endorsed, and
- 2) that Councillors Banks, Corney, Davies, Diaz and Dickinson be appointed to the Task and Finish Group to work on the Strategic Review of Markets Services alongside the Executive Councillor for Operations and Environment.

25 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 considered by the Panel.

Councillor Giles suggested there might be some value in undertaking a study on the issue of fly posting. Whereupon, the Panel,

RESOLVED

that the Executive Councillor for Corporate Services be requested to provide a date for the Digital Strategy to be submitted to the Panel.

Chairman