

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (PERFORMANCE AND GROWTH) held in Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 2 March 2022.

PRESENT: Councillor S J Corney – Chairman.

Councillors E R Butler, B S Chapman,
I D Gardener, Dr P L R Gaskin,
M Haines, J P Morris, A Roberts and
S Wakeford.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors D B Dew, T D Sanderson and M Shellens.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors R Fuller, J Neish and K I Prentice.

58. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd February 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

59. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

60. 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 March 2022 to 30th June 2022.

61. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY SPEND ALLOCATION

By means of a report by the Service Manager Growth (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Community Infrastructure Levy Spend Allocation Report was presented to the Panel.

After an introduction on the item, Councillor Roberts noted that the governance process had struck the right balance on this round of spend and welcomed the reasoning of officer recommendations on both supported and declined applications.

Following a question from Councillor Roberts regarding the

Wheatsheaf Junction project, the Panel heard that additional costs incurred are to be met by Cambridgeshire County Council.

Councillor Chapman queried the anticipated delay to the mains power supply project in Priory Park, St Neots. The Panel were informed that the delay was as a result of amends made by the applicant.

It was confirmed that the project report details on Hinchingsbrooke Country Park were in the public domain following an enquiry from Councillor Morris.

Having welcomed the report, the Panel thereupon

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be encouraged to endorse the recommendations contained within the report.

62. LANDSCAPE AND TOWNSCAPE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

By means of a report by the Strategic Growth Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Landscape and Townscape Supplementary Planning Document was presented to the Panel.

Councillor Chapman expressed his disappointment in the lack of community engagement with the consultation as the document will impact on future planning applications. However, the Chairman observed that the document was very thorough and well written and the lack of response may have been due to having no objections. Councillor Roberts also praised the report and commented especially on the interactive map, although it was empathised that the lack of community engagement was disappointing. The Panel heard that all towns and parishes had been contacted for comment as part of the consultation process.

In response to a further comment from Councillor Roberts, it was confirmed to the Panel that towns and parishes could now use this document as the basis to create a neighbourhood plan.

Councillor Butler expressed his disappointment over the Great Fen Project. It was stated that valuable farmland had been used for this project which, it was claimed, did not engage with local communities or manage its land. The point was noted.

Having welcomed the report, the Panel thereupon

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be encouraged to endorse the

recommendations contained within the report.

63. NATIONAL NON DOMESTIC RATES: DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF POLICY REVIEW

By means of a report by the Revenues and Benefits Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the National Non-Domestic Rates Discretionary Rate Relief Policy Review was presented to the Panel.

Following a query from Councillor Butler, it was clarified to the Panel that the proposed relief would be in addition to existing rate reliefs already in place.

Councillor Roberts praised a great report and in response to a question from Councillor Roberts on the matter, the Panel heard that a comprehensive communications plan was in place to create awareness across the district.

In response to a question by Councillor Gardener, the Panel heard that cases would be looked at individually on a case by case basis by an experienced and dedicated team who would keep a sensible and fluid approach to applications.

Whereupon, having welcomed the report, the Panel

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be encouraged to endorse the recommendations contained within the report.

64. MARKET TOWNS PROGRAMME - SPRING UPDATE

By means of a report by the Strategic Growth Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Market Towns Programme – Spring Update was presented to the Panel.

The Chairman complemented the report and praised the phenomenal amount of work done by the officers.

This sentiment was echoed by Councillor Roberts, who also enquired if assurances could be given on the timescales mentioned in point 7.1 of the report. The Panel were assured that the Council were committed to ensuring that the funding provided the best outcome for residents and maximised the potential of the opportunity. The Panel were further reassured that there were no concerns over the deadlines referred to.

Following several questions from Councillor Chapman regarding the projects within St Neots, the Panel were advised that conversations were ongoing with relevant parties regarding the Old Falcon property in order to make best use of available funding and regeneration schemes within the town centre. It

was also confirmed that a public consultation had begun in the previous year to ensure that the voices of St Neots residents and businesses would be heard throughout the Future High Streets Fund.

Councillor Chapman expressed further concerns that the demographic of residents living near to the new footbridge would mean it's potential would not be realised and queried if any research on demographics had been undertaken. It was clarified to the Panel that the new footbridge was a positive step in encouraging active travel within the town and further assisted in making the town centre as accessible as possible to all residents.

Clarification was requested by Councillor Wakeford regarding the timescales mentioned within the report. The Panel were advised that the report would return to the democratic cycle of meetings in addition to a public consultation, both expected in Summer 2022, to further update on and to progress projects.

The Panel thereupon

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be encouraged to endorse the recommendations contained within the report.

65. 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