

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, 8 June 2022.

PRESENT: Councillor S A Howell – Chair.

Councillors S Cawley, S J Corney,
I D Gardener, J A Gray, J E Harvey,
S A Howell, R Martin, Dr M Pickering and
N Wells.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors A M Blackwell and R A Slade.

IN ATTENDANCE: S W Ferguson, S L Taylor and S Wakeford.

4. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 6th April 2022 and 18th May 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

6. 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 June 2022 to 30th September 2022. It was noted that the Notice of Key Executive Decisions is a published document and as such updates and amends may occur after the publication of the document and agenda.

7. MARKET TOWNS PROGRAMME - SUMMER UPDATE

By means of a report by the Corporate Director (Place) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Market Towns Programme – Summer Update was presented to the Panel.

Councillors Cawley and Gardener queried the involvement of

residents living in rural areas surrounding Huntingdonshire's market towns as they did not appear to have been consulted during the process so far. It was noted that these residents are users of the market towns and important in their continued growth. The Panel heard that the new administration would be taking a proactive approach and welcome input and feedback on the process so far and would take this point into consideration and assess the feasibility of including this.

Following a further enquiry from Councillor Gardener, the Panel were assured that the new administration would be assessing the progress to date and would communicate with members and residents as this develops and moves forward.

Following a question from Councillor Cawley, the Panel heard that there were recognised deadlines surrounding funding that had been secured to date but that forward momentum was being maintained to ensure the effectiveness of and maximise these opportunities for residents. The Panel were further assured that there would be a planned stepping up of stakeholder engagement to ensure residents be included rather than excluded.

Having heard further concerns be expressed over the timescales involved, the Panel heard that despite having inherited an ambitious timescale, the administration planned to continue to work towards deadlines already set and maximise funding opportunities for the benefit of the district and its residents.

Councillor Corney observed that stakeholders within communities are constantly changing and the Panel were advised that officers monitored this regularly. The Panel heard that a summer of engagement was planned to further increase engagement with stakeholders and that further detail on this would be brought to the Panel at a future meeting. The Panel were encouraged to share feedback with officers on identified stakeholders within the communities they represent.

Councillor Cawley questioned why point 11.1 of the report stated that the recently approved Environmental Principles were to be reviewed as these had been agreed to be very robust when approved by the Council only six months prior. The Panel were assured that the administration wished to ensure that the points were as ambitious yet practical as possible and any updates on this matter would flow through the democratic cycle of meetings.

Councillor Gray enquired on the thoughts and priorities of the newly appointed Executive Councillor in moving this body of work forward. The Panel heard that a balance would be struck between delivering new opportunities which aligned with the

current administrations principles and maximising advantages and funding of the work already obtained. It was noted that the new Cabinet were grateful to the previous administration for the positive position achieved to date and would build upon this good work.

The Panel praised the report and thanked the officers for their diligence and hard work in bringing these opportunities forward for the district and thereupon

RESOLVED

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

**8. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT, 2021/22
QUARTER 4**

By means of a report by the Business Intelligence and Performance Manager (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book) the Corporate Performance Report 2021/22 Quarter 4 report was presented to the Panel.

Councillor Gray enquired on the initial thoughts of the new Executive Councillor on this report and whether there were any additional areas of focus identified. The Panel heard that the new administration would be building on a great foundation but that as the district progresses post pandemic, new challenges will be faced. The proposed refresh of the Corporate Plan which is due to come through the democratic cycle in the coming months will help to identify revised indicators to ensure that the Council is best serving the needs of its residents.

Following a question from Councillor Cawley on the challenges faced by the Planning service over recent years, the Panel heard that steps had been put in place to remedy this. These are challenges faced by the Planning sector nationally but revised working practices and adapted proactive recruitment processes, including the potential development of a Graduate pathway, are helping to attract new members and resilience to the team.

Councillor Wells enquired on how a green indicator for new homes could be achieved and the Panel heard that the pandemic and supply issues faced by the construction industry had greatly affected this over the past few years, however it was hoped that this should be achievable over the coming year.

Councillor Cawley enquired around the administration involved within the Planning service which took up valuable officer time, this point was noted for further investigation and would be communicated back to the Panel at a future date.

The Panel praised the hard work of the officers around the Council for a fantastic report and achievement in the position left by the previous administration.

Having welcomed the report, the Panel thereupon

RESOLVED

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

9. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the press and public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

10. MATERIALS RECYCLING FACILITY - CONTRACT EXTENSION

The Panel gave consideration to an exempt report by the General Operations Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Annex to the Minute Book) on Materials Recycling Facility – Contract Extension.

The Panel heard from the General Operations Manager, who introduced the report and answered Members questions. The Panel expressed their gratitude and thanks to the officers for a thorough report and also to the service and employees for the continuation of waste collection during the testing times of the pandemic. The Panel expressed their support for the proposals outlined within the report.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

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

11. RE-ADMITTANCE OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

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

12. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY – REMIT, ROLE AND STUDIES

By means of a report by the Democratic Services Officer (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book) the Overview and Scrutiny – Remit, Roles and Studies report was presented to the Panel.

Having welcomed the report, the Panel thereupon

RESOLVED

to endorse the recommendations contained within the report.

13. 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.

Councillors Cawley, Corney, Gardener and Howell expressed an interest in joining the working group of the Review of External Appointments to Outside Organisations study.

Councillors Corney and Gray expressed dismay in the delay in taking the Market Towns study report to Cabinet. It was observed that this study was a good stepping stone in laying foundations for future studies and that its delay in being presented to Cabinet did not reflect well on the democratic process.

Chairman