

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, 7 September 2022.

- PRESENT: Councillor C M Gleadow – Chairman.
- Councillors S J Corney, I D Gardener,
J E Harvey, S A Howell, R Martin,
Dr M Pickering, R A Slade and N Wells.
- APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors A M Blackwell, S Cawley and J A Gray.
- IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors S W Ferguson, B A Mickleburgh and S Wakeford.

23. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6th July 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

24. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

25. 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 August 2022 to 30th November 2022.

26. MARKET TOWNS PROGRAMME - AUTUMN 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 – Autumn Update was presented to the Panel.

Following questions from Councillor Pickering and Councillor Gardener, the Panel heard that the options being developed for the St Neots Priory Quarter were merely adding detail to the work already undertaken. The Panel were further assured that the team were using all previous studies available to them and were not seeking to redo previously undertaken work but to add detail to it and to ensure that it reflected current market rates in a rapidly changing economic climate.

The Chair requested, following comments from several Councillors, that details of additional costs incurred by the consultancy work at St Neots, be included in the next update of the Market Towns

Programme.

In response to a question from Councillor Corney, the Panel were advised that the outcome of the application for the CPCA Local Growth Fund for funding for Ramsey was anticipated to be determined within September and that this would be communicated once known.

It was clarified to the Panel that none of the projects had been ready to commence at the change in administration earlier in the year and that the detailed work now being carried out had been anticipated.

Following further questions from Councillor Corney and Councillor Martin, it was clarified that the work in the four market towns was specific to each town and that further consultations would be carried out where appropriate for specific projects.

Councillor Howell observed that the plans published on the website were not easily accessed. The Panel heard that hard copies would be displayed in public buildings within towns, the Panel were also advised that the team were agreeable to any further suggestions of additional suitable areas for this.

Councillor Harvey expressed concern that despite the work being done by the team, funding may become unavailable due to the economic climate. The Panel were reassured that by undertaking research and planning, projects would be ready to start as and when funding is secured. Although funding is subject to availability, it was hoped that it would continue to be available in the long term.

Following questions from Councillor Wells and Councillor Gardener, the Panel heard that that the team would be liaising with both town and parish councils to maximise communications channels.

The Panel heard, following a question from Councillor Pickering, that options for the Old Falcon premises in St Neots were being developed and that a paper would be brought into the democratic cycle of meetings in the Autumn.

Having welcomed the report, it was thereupon

RESOLVED

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

27. FINANCE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2022/23 QUARTER 1

By means of a report by the Chief Finance Officer, (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Finance Performance Report 2022/23 Quarter 1 was presented to the Panel.

Councillor Gardener enquired on the anticipated timescales for the reintroduction of preplanning application advice service as this had previously been a useful revenue stream for the Council. The Panel heard this was in the process of being reintroduced and Councillors could expect to see confirmation of this in the Autumn.

Following a question from Councillor Pickering, the Panel heard that Council Tax payment receipts continued to be monitored so that any changes to these due to the current economic climate could be accommodated for.

Having welcomed the report, it was thereupon

RESOLVED

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

28. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2022/23 QUARTER 1

By means of a report by the Business Intelligence and Performance Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Corporate Performance Report 2022/23 Quarter 1 was presented to the Panel.

Following a question from Councillor Howell on what benefits groups could expect by achieving the 'Good to Go' status, the Panel heard that the team would investigate the details of this and communicate back to the Panel.

The Panel heard, following a question from Councillor Martin, that the new administration would like to set more challenging targets for performance and that the existing targets would be amended as the year progresses.

In response to a question from Councillor Pickering, the Panel heard that whilst many targets could be impacted by the current economic climate, the Council is committed to supporting its residents and helping to manage the impact of national and international events.

Having welcomed the report, it was thereupon

RESOLVED

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

29. 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