

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 November 2022.

PRESENT: Councillor C M Gleadow – Chair.

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

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors S J Corney, R Martin and R A Slade.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors S W Ferguson and S Wakeford .

35. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5th October 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

36. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

37. 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 November 2022 to 28th February 2023.

38. ACTIVE TRAVEL STRATEGY FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

By means of a report by the Chief Planning Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Active Travel Strategy for Cambridgeshire Public Consultation report was presented to the Panel.

It was observed by Councillor Gray that the rural nature of Huntingdonshire was not at the heart of the strategy, in particular the lack of focus on walking and cycling routes in rural areas as compared to urban areas. The Panel heard that this sentiment was understood and covered by section six of the response.

In response to statements by Councillor Gardener and Councillor Pickering, who felt that positive improvements and options to improve active travel should form part of the

response, the Panel heard that such suggestions would be welcomed by the Executive Councillor. The Panel agreed that there were many issues across the district with the failure to link pedestrian and cycle routes to form a district wide network, specific examples from Alconbury and Hail Weston were given by Councillor Gardener and Councillor Cawley. It was further observed that until valid alternatives were offered for rural areas, residents would not have a valid alternative to private cars thus affecting carbon targets and aspirations for the district. Councillor Cawley also observed that stronger language could be used in the response to reinforce this sentiment.

Councillor Howell questioned the lack of public consultation events in the north of the district, following which the Panel heard that the events had been arranged by the County Council who had also made the consultation and plans available at key libraries and online for all residents.

Having welcomed the report, it was thereupon

RESOLVED

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

39. HUNTINGDONSHIRE TRANSPORT STRATEGY

By means of a report by the Chief Planning Officer (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book) the Huntingdonshire Transport Strategy report was presented to the Panel.

Councillor Gray observed a carelessness in the approach of the County Council on this strategy with incorrect road labelling on the map at page 5 and incorrect figures for the population of Huntingdonshire, it was further noted that these inconsistencies did not inspire confidence in the Strategy. Councillor Gray also observed that the strategy did not address the significant developments across rural areas of the district with specific reference to policy TSH1 in regards to sustainable growth, by this omission and the broad assumptions made, the robustness of the strategy must therefore be called into question. The Panel heard that the strategy will support the delivery of the Local Plan 2036. The Local Plan has sustainable growth at its core with not only the market towns but key services centres and smaller settlements being identified within the strategy. The rural nature of the district is understood but the Council need to be mindful of what can realistically and reasonably be achieved.

The growth of developments in key services areas was observed by Councillor Gray, along with the lack of active or

alternative travel options thus encouraging reliance on private car usage. The Panel heard that Huntingdonshire would be unlikely to see the disappearance of the private car any time soon, however it should be possible to use alternative transport methods for part journeys which would be progress.

It was observed by Councillor Gardener that the document holds grand aspirations but lacked in the detail of how this would be achievable for the district. The Panel heard that the detail is expected to follow as the strategy is finalised and the action plan taken forward and linked into the County Council Transport Investment Plan.

In response to a question from Councillor Howell on the development of 5,000 homes at Great Haddon, which is outside of the County but bordering on the north of the district, the Panel heard that planning process would have been followed for this development with local infrastructure and transport options being taken into account.

Following a question from Councillor Cawley, the Panel heard that the Council would continue to work with the County Council and would involve Councillors in this conversation as much as practicable.

Having discussed the report, it was thereupon

RESOLVED

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

40. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2022-23 QUARTER 2

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 2022/23 Quarter 2 was presented to the Panel.

Following a question from Councillor Harvey, the Panel heard that changes to attendance at One Leisure were likely due to early cost of living pressures and that the One Leisure team continued to monitor and react accordingly to attendance reports. It was also advised that increased energy costs would likely impact the service in the coming months.

Councillor Cawley and Councillor Gray observed that the One Leisure offer is not the same as it was pre COVID and enquired on plans to reinstate fitness classes and activities which were previously available. The Panel were advised that as that level of detail is not available within the report this would be investigated and communicated back at a later date.

In response to a question from Councillor Wells, the Panel heard that the Council continued to work with partners on the development and availability of Cambs WiFi across the district and that performance feedback could be relayed back to the providers.

The Panel heard that Community Chest Grants, where payment details were available, were paid to date in reply to an enquiry from Councillor Howell.

Following a question from Councillor Cawley on the difference in tonnage between green compostable and dry recycling waste in PI1, the Panel were advised that a detailed explanation would be sought and circulated to the Panel following the meeting.

Councillor Gardener enquired about the increase in days to process new benefit claims in PI13, the Panel heard that whilst there is some seasonality to claim processing this is reflective of the increase in claims received for processing due to the current economic climate.

Councillor Gray questioned the statement at KA1 and observed that a Climate Emergency had not been declared. He stated that this related to the cost of living crisis and felt that this inaccuracy was misleading.

Some concern was expressed surrounding continued delays to the Market Town Programme projects in St Ives and St Neots, in particular the effect of these delays to the residents of the town due to the continued decrease in spending power of the available funds as goods and services continue to rise in line with the economic climate. Following debate on the progress of the Market Town Programme projects, the Panel were assured that detail on this would be sought and reported back. Councillor Wakeford, who at the invitation of the Chair, joined the Panel, clarified that ongoing work with partners would ensure the right projects were commissioned and remained affordable.

Councillor Gray observed that the project at St Neots Riverside Walks should be shown as Red status due to unresolved objections from the Environment Agency making the project undeliverable within the given timescales. The Panel were advised that a progress status would be sought and reported back along with revised timescales.

Councillor Blackwell challenged the stated forecast decline of footfall for Huntingdon Town Centre in PI5 as many activities were being undertaken by the Town Council to engage and encourage the community to the area.

Having welcomed the report, it was thereupon

RESOLVED

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

41. 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