

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, 4 January 2023.

PRESENT: Councillor C M Gleadow – Chair.

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

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors S J Conboy and T D Sanderson .

52. MINUTES

The penultimate paragraph of Minute 22/45 was amended to read;

Councillor Gray stated that whilst broadly supportive of the thrust of what is overall hoped to be achieved, there was particular concern that none of the proposals had been developed. It was further stated that greater detail alongside the business plans would be desirable before authority be delegated to others for decision making. The Panel were informed that external funding brought challenges of tight timescales but that this was something that the Executive were happy to reflect upon and come back with.

Minute 22/51 was amended with the addition of a paragraph to read;

The Panel were advised that the draft report of the Review of External Appointments to Outside Organisations would be discussed at a meeting of the Working Group later in the month.

after which the Minutes of the meeting held on 6th December 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

53. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

54. 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 January 2023 to 30th April 2023.

55. HUNTINGDONSHIRE PLACE STRATEGY UPDATE

The Panel heard that following publication of the agenda, it had been advised that the Huntingdonshire Place Strategy Update be best presented to the Panel prior to the items relating to the Local Plan. The Panel were in agreement that the order of the agenda be adjusted to accommodate this.

By means of a report by the Corporate Director (Place) (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book) the Place Strategy Update Report was presented to the Panel.

It was noted that all Council members were invited to a workshop on the 27 September 2022 to share their views. Members were further invited to a session on the 31 January 2023 to further refine the strategy.

Councillor Pickering observed that the headline 'What if the car was a relic of the past' suggested an unthinkable future for many residents. The Panel were assured that this was a discussion point as it was appreciated that this may not be practical or feasible in parts of the district. It was further highlighted that discussion continued on how to reduce length of car journeys and how that could link with more sustainable transport. The Panel also heard that this point would be looked at to adapt to a more positive messaging approach whilst still conveying the same topic.

Councillor Gray enquired about continuity plans for the project due to the resignation of the lead officer. The Panel were advised that planning had been undertaken to ensure continuation of work during the recruitment process.

Councillor Gray further expressed that whilst remaining optimistic, there were some reservations about what could realistically be achieved and whether or not the views of local residents had been reflected in the identified pathways. The Panel were assured that the priorities within the report had been established following engagement with residents and communities.

In addition to this, Councillor Gray questioned whether Huntingdonshire would be a leader in some of the aspirations highlighted within the report. The Panel were advised that whilst the Council may not be a leader in these areas, it would be a facilitator in making them happen and setting a good example for residents to follow. Furthermore the Panel heard that through community engagement and working with partners to ensure communication between interested groups, a positive,

proactive and supportive district community would be encouraged.

It was thereupon

RESOLVED

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

56. HUNTINGDONSHIRE LOCAL PLAN REVIEW AND PROPOSED UPDATE

By means of a report by the Chief Planning Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book, the Huntingdonshire Local Plan Review and Proposed Update was presented to the Panel.

Following a question from Councillor Corney regarding the effect of a new Local Plan on any new or developing neighbourhood plans, the Panel were advised that the guidelines state that the newest plan sets precedence. However, there was still considerable time before the implementation of the new Local Plan during which neighbourhood plans made since the adoption of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 would take precedence and this would only come into effect where there is a conflict in advice between the two plans, otherwise they may run in conjunction with each other. It was further observed by Councillor Corney that titled balance was remembered only too well and it would be preferred to stay away from this in the future.

The Panel heard, following a question from Councillor Howell, that reserves were created annually alongside the Medium Term Financial Strategy to ensure sufficient funds were available. The Panel were advised that the resources are expected to be sufficient for a 'fit for purpose' Local Plan but careful management of the preparation process would be required to remain within budget.

Councillor Blackwell enquired about the feasibility of the timetable for proposed public engagement and how realistic this may be. The Panel heard that the majority of deadlines during preparation of Local Plans were statutory, therefore consistency would be established by maintaining the timescales across the majority of engagement opportunities. The team also planned to co-ordinate with other departments and work flexibly with local Councils where possible.

Following a question from Councillor Pickering on how much the Plan could be future proofed, it was advised that there are changes being proposed nationally, and that the team will work

to anticipate as much as possible to minimise risk.

Councillor Gray praised the very experienced team for their work so far and expressed confidence in the time ahead, a sentiment which was echoed by Councillor Gleadow.

It was thereupon

RESOLVED

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

57. STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

By means of a report by the Chief Planning Officer (a copy of which was appended within the Minute Book), the Statement of Community Involvement Report was presented to the Panel

Councillor Harvey enquired whether any consideration would be given to extending the deadlines given that this had been done to accommodate the St Ives Masterplan. The Panel heard that whilst deadlines would be firm, communication would be ongoing with local Councils. It was also highlighted that these consultations go above the Council's obligations as the Council is not legally required to consult on this Statement.

Following a further question on parish communications from Councillor Cawley, the Panel heard that the team were grateful for Member's support in getting the message to parishes and that a relevant briefing would be shared in due course.

Councillor Gray observed that whilst the Plan was fairly future proof, it was important to engage with residents throughout the process.

It was thereupon

RESOLVED

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

58. SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL SCOPING REPORT

By means of a report by the Chief Planning Officer (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book) the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report was presented to the Panel

Councillor Gardener observed that clearer labelling to the maps would be helpful specifically mentioning labelling of village halls and flood zones. The Panel heard that the level of detail would be incorporated as much as possible given the scales involved

with further detail being added online. Furthermore it was advised that a suite of water management studies would be undertaken and would assist future planning decisions within the district. The Panel were also advised that a link could be added to the document to the current Strategic Flood Risk Assessment on the Council's website to provide access to more detailed mapping.

Following an enquiry from Councillor Harvey on the size of dwellings coming through for development, the Panel were advised that whilst there was no decision on this yet, the available information highlighted growth in the older population of the district, therefore demand in smaller properties was anticipated in the future.

Councillor Gray sought assurance that best practice was being taken from colleagues in neighbouring authorities. The Panel were assured that this was underway despite the developing stage of progress so far.

Following a further question from Councillor Gray, the Panel heard that the Local Plan would work alongside emerging strategies such as the Climate and Place Strategies. Collaborative work would be undertaken as the Page 184 of 498 project progressed to ensure assimilation and cohesion between Strategies.

Having been assured that annual reporting would be undertaken to report on progress to date, the Panel thereupon

RESOLVED

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

59. GREAT GRANSDEN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN EXAMINATION OUTCOME AND PROGRESSION TO REFERENDUM

By means of a report by the Chief Planning Officer (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book) the Great Gransden Neighbourhood Plan was presented to the Panel.

In response to a question from Councillor Pickering, the Panel heard that Conservation Area Appraisals are not a requirement of the Neighbourhood Plan process, it is a separate process. The approach to updating Conservation Area Appraisals, and timings for review is under consideration as part of the work associated with Development Management.

Councillor Gray observed that whilst there is acceptance of the examiner's report, it is important to liaise with local communities to establish and maintain the features which make their community special.

Following the discussion the committee praised the detail and quality of the report, recognising the work undertaken by the team. It was thereupon

RESOLVED

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

60. 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.

Councillor Gray raised concerns about the lack of items on the future work programme. The Panel were in agreement on this point and resolved to raise topics for consideration at future meetings.

Chair