

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, 5 April 2023.

PRESENT: Councillor C M Gleadow – Chair.

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

APOLOGIES: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor J A Gray.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor T D Sanderson.

88. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5th April 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

89. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor S Corney declared a Non-Registerable Interest under Minute 22/92 as Cambridgeshire County Councillor for Warboys & The Stukeleys Ward.

Councillor Blackwell declared a Non-Registerable Interest under Minute 22/93 as a Member of Huntingdon Town Council.

Councillor Cawley declared a Non-Registerable Interest under Minute 22/93 as a Ward Member for Great Staughton.

Councillor Corney declared Non-Registerable Interests under Minute 22/93 as Cambridgeshire County Councillor for Warboys & The Stukeleys Ward, as a Ward Member for Ramsey and as a Member of Ramsey Town Council.

Councillor Gardener declared a Non-Registerable Interest under Minute 22/93 as Cambridgeshire County Councillor for Alconbury and Kimbolton and as the Chair of Grafham Parish Council.

Councillor Gleadow declared a Non-Registerable Interest under Minute 22/93 as a Member of St Ives Town Council.

Councillor Harvey declared a Non-Registerable Interest under Minute 22/93 as a Ward Member for Huntingdon East.

Councillor Howell declared a Non-Registerable Interest under Minute 22/93 as a Ward Member for Yaxley.

Councillor Martin declared an Other Registerable Interest in Minute 22/93 as a previous Member of Sawtry Parish Council and a Non-Registerable Interest as a Ward Member for Sawtry.

Councillor Pickering declared a Non-Registerable Interest under Minute 22/93 as his daughter attends Longsands Academy.

Councillor Slade declared an Other Registerable Interest in Minute 22/93 as a Governor for Longsands Academy.

Councillor Wells declared a Non-Registerable Interest under Minute 22/93 as a Member of St Ives Town Council.

90. 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 April 2023 to 31st July 2023.

91. ISSUES ENGAGEMENT PAPER 2023

By means of a report by the Chief Planning Officer (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book) the Issues Engagement Paper 2023 was presented to the Panel.

Councillor Pickering praised the excellent report, a sentiment which was echoed by the Panel.

Following questions from Councillors Blackwell, Pickering and Corney on the target audience of the consultation along with questions relating to resident engagement and timescales, the Panel were advised;

- that the consultation period would run for 10 weeks from 26th April – 5th July 2023;
- that the documents would be interactive with hyperlinks being added to allow residents to access the parts of interest to them;
- that the different forms would use language relevant to the related document and anticipated audience;
- it was noted that the Panel requested to view the interactive documents alongside the written reports in the future.

The Panel heard, in response to questions from Councillors

Howell and Gardener, that the team would be investigating how best to ensure public engagement could encompass all areas of the district including northern and rural areas.

Councillor Cawley enquired what a good engagement level would look like to the team. The Panel heard that whilst a number would be difficult to quantify at this stage, the team would endeavour to reach as many residents and businesses as possible. However, it was further assured that the examiner would be looking at methods of engagement rather than numbers of responses in the final plan. Following the response, Councillor Cawley's suggestion of a simple communications pack for members to use to encourage engagement with parish councils in particular was noted.

Following a question from Councillor Gleadow, the Panel heard that a communications plan was being developed to promote engagement with the younger generation across the district.

The Panel were advised, following a question from Councillor Gardener, that although the team wished to engage with parish councils it would not be practical or achievable to visit all throughout the district therefore alternatives were being developed.

Councillor Corney enquired whether there was any flexibility in the consultation dates, whereupon the Panel heard that parishes were encouraged to communicate with the team if the dates were anticipated to cause an issue.

Councillor Slade expressed concerns that the system used for responses may prove discouraging due to the need to register. The Panel were assured that the registration process was very swift and required minimal details and was only required for responding to the full Issues Engagement Paper not the Summary or Easy Read versions. Furthermore messaging will be shared via social media to publicise the consultations, the mechanisms for responses to be received would be investigated. Following concerns from Councillor Pickering that Facebook is thought to have an older demographic the Panel were assured that other services such as Twitter and LinkedIn would also be used along with YouTube videos.

Following an enquiry from Councillor Martin relating to residents without digital access, the Panel heard that hard copies would be available in local libraries. It was further explained that written responses could be submitted or a paper form requested via phone or email. The Panel were encouraged to communicate with parishes and make use of village newsletters to communicate with residents where possible.

In response to questions from Councillors Gardener and Corney

relating to visibility in the wider community, the Panel heard that a Communications plan was being developed to address this, alongside use of YouTube videos and a short presentation for parishes to use.

Following a question from Councillor Pickering about the ownership and maintenance of open spaces in new developments, the Panel heard that this is actioned in conjunction with the developers and conversations around this would continue as new developments came forward.

Councillor Gardener praised the suggestion of active travel across new developments but enquired if it would be possible to develop this to ensure it also runs across existing developments. The Panel were reminded that the current Call for Sites consultation includes an option for active travel and that this was an ongoing area of development.

It was thereupon

RESOLVED

that the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel be passed to Cabinet for their consideration when making a decision upon the recommendations contained within the report.

92. THE STUKELEYS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN EXAMINATION OUTCOME AND PROGRESSION TO REFERENDUM

By means of a report by the Chief Planning Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Stukeleys Neighbourhood Plan examination outcome and progression to referendum was presented to the Panel.

Following an introduction to the report from the Executive Councillor and Officer, Councillor Corney praised an excellent piece of work and observed, as Ward Councillor, that the plan was supported by the parish.

It was thereupon

RESOLVED

that the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel be passed to Cabinet for their consideration when making a decision upon the recommendations contained within the report.

93. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY FUNDING ALLOCATION

By means of a report by the Chief Planning Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Community Infrastructure Levy Funding Allocation report was presented to the Panel.

Councillor Harvey enquired about the approval for the police application which supports three counties, when the application for Huntingdon Pavilion had been refused. The Panel heard that the purpose of CIL is to support infrastructure and make improvements to the local area and policing is considered to be part of 'community'. It was felt that the application by the police met the criteria whereas the pavilion application did not for the reasons mentioned in the report. Following a request from Councillor Gleadow as to whether the lack of funding from Sports England had played a part, the Panel heard that the business case of the application was considered alongside expert advice from the Council's leisure team. It was noted that CIL funding is limited and the need to be assured that the project can be fully delivered is vital.

Following an enquiry by Councillor Pickering, the Panel heard that CIL funding is subject to an ongoing national government consultation until June. The current process has been paused to allow for a full review of CIL governance to ensure it enables growth and provides value for money. While this work is ongoing it will also have regard to emerging guidance associated with the proposed Infrastructure Levy.

Councillor Cawley observed that the report showed a sensible approach to applications by officers with clear reasoning for their decisions

It was thereupon

RESOLVED

that the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel would be passed to Cabinet for their consideration when making a decision upon the recommendations contained within the report. It was noted that Councillors Blackwell and Harvey abstained from this resolution.

94. 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.

Chair