

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, 3 April 2024.

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

72. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6th March 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

73. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor A Jennings declared a non-registerable interest in minute 23/76 as a member of the Priory Centre Delivery Group .

Councillor R Slade declared an other registerable interest in minute 23/76 as a member of St Neots Town Council.

Councillor N Wells declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in minute 23/76 as a resident of the Broadway, St Ives.

Councillor A Blackwell declared an other registerable interest in minute 23/78 as a member of Huntingdon Town Council.

Councillor S Corney declared an other registerable interest in minute 23/78 as a trustee of the Ramsey Community Centre.

Councillor I Gardener declared an other registerable interest in minute 23/78 as Chair of Grafham Parish Council.

Councillor I Gardener declared an other registerable interest in minute 23/78 as Cambridgeshire County Councillor for Alconbury and Kimbolton.

Councillor I Gardener declared an other registerable interest in minute 23/78 as a member of the Cambridgeshire Fire

Authority.

Councillor J Harvey declared a non-registerable interest in minute 23/78 as her children played cricket at Huntingdon Cricket Club.

74. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel received and noted the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme and the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions (a copy of which has been appended in the Minute Book) which had been prepared by the Executive Leader for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st July 2024.

75. RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The responses to questions arising from previous meetings were noted.

76. MARKET TOWNS PROGRAMME SPRING UPDATE

By means of a report by the Regeneration and Housing Delivery Manager, (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the Market Towns Programme Spring Update was presented to the Panel.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Pickering, the Panel heard that the planning application for the Priory Centre was primarily the same as the application presented during the public engagement events but had some amendments to reflect comments received during the engagement events. The Panel heard that the application had been submitted and a link to the application on the portal would be circulated once the application became live. It was also confirmed that the application allowed for a scope of budget scenarios depending on the funding available once the project was underway.

The Panel were assured, in response to questions from Councillor Corney and Councillor Jennings, that deadlines for funding from both the CPCA and the FHSF had been extended and would allow projects allocated those funding streams to be completed. The Panel were further assured that the team continued to maximise multiple funding sources to allow the fullest flexibility for projects, with timescales for projects being adjusted to reflect this. It was also confirmed that project dates would be included within the next report to allow for transparency and clarity.

Following a request from Councillor Slade for a location plan of the digital screens, the Panel heard that procurement had been completed on the project and the team were working with

partners to implement the plans. It was advised that a location plan would be sought and provided as an update to the Panel. In response to a further question on the matter from Councillor Corney, the Panel heard that sessions would be held by the contractors for District Councillors to be fully appraised on the project and that there was an aim for the project to be fully implemented by March 2025.

Councillor Pickering expressed his delight that the Old Falcon development was moving forward, and the Panel heard that it would be a long term project for the final development but that any potential for a short term cosmetic improvement would be updated to the Panel as it was developed.

In response to a further question from Councillor Slade, the Panel heard that a robust communications plan was in place with the County Councillor who are managing the project, the team would assess this plan and liaise with Members directly should it prove necessary.

Following a question from Councillor Cawley, the Panel were advised that funding granted to Huntingdon Town Council would assist them in their purchase for additional space for the Cromwell Museum and that the Town Council would then be looking at further funding opportunities to facilitate refurbishment of the space to be incorporated within the museum's portfolio.

The Panel were advised, in response to a further question from Councillor Cawley, that the Shop Fronts Grant Scheme was currently only available to shops within the four market towns due to restrictions within the funding streams, however alternatives were being investigated to allow a similar scheme to be developed for Key Service Areas within the district. Following a further question from Councillor Corney, the Panel were advised that applications to the scheme thus far had not experienced significant delays where planning permission had been required.

In addition Councillor Jennings enquired about the location of the Kebab Van and whether this would be moving to the Market Square, in response to this, Councillor Wakeford stated that he would investigate with both Licensing and the Market Towns team and provide a response back to the Panel at a later date.

Following the discussion, it was

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.

77. UK SHARED PROSPERITY AND RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND UPDATE

By means of a report by the Regeneration and Housing Delivery Manager, (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the UK Shared Prosperity and Rural England Prosperity Fund Update was presented to the Panel.

Following an enquiry from Councillor Gardener on the progress and implementation of the Electrical Vehicle Charging Scheme, the Panel heard that whilst there were updates on project deliveries within the Appendix to the report, the Electrical Vehicle Strategy was still in the implementation process but that progress would be reported back to the Panel in due course.

Councillor Jennings enquired how the team would be managing the success of projects where the measure was stated to improve perception. Following which the Panel were assured that work was underway on how to better demonstrate and articulate project success and that this measure would be developed into a more tangible measure and that this would be further elaborated in a future report.

Following a question from Councillor Gleadow, the Panel were assured that the budget risks relating to the programme for staff had been assessed and that were felt to be sufficient.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Cawley, the Panel heard that details on the Huntingdon Business Accelerator were available and would be distributed to Members following the meeting to allow further communication with interested parishes and businesses.

Following questions from Councillor Blackwell and Councillor Gardener, the Panel heard that it was hoped that active travel could be developed in rural areas to connect and improve routes between villages, towns and points of interest. It was also stated that the funding mentioned within the report was designed to develop feasibility studies for up to five areas which in turn would allow those applicants to mobilise and bid for funding to fulfil the project as it becomes available.

Following the discussion, it was

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.

78. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY SPEND ALLOCATION

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

Following a question from Councillor Corney regarding why so many applications had been unsuccessful in the funding round, the Panel were advised that applications need to demonstrate the need for growth within their community. It was observed that during previous funding rounds, the Parish Forum had provided the opportunity for preliminary discussions on applications and that work would be undertaken to ensure applicants were educated about the requirements for a successful application.

In response to an observation from Councillor Corney, the Panel were advised that applicants, upon submitting their application, should receive a confirmation email confirming the submission.

Councillor Harvey enquired about the review of the CIL process which had been discussed at a previous meeting of the Panel and why funding was ongoing during that process. The Panel heard that the review was proving to be a lengthy process and having been appraised that several applications were ready for funding, it had been decided to progress with the current round.

Further to a question from Councillor Slade, the Panel were advised that the St Neots Fire Station application outcome was due to the monetary amount being requested rather than the percentage of the project.

In response to a question from Councillor Jennings about further delays to the foot and cycleways within Riverside Park, St Neots, the Panel heard that more detailed information would be sought and relayed back to the Panel.

The Panel were reassured, following a question from Councillor Harvey, that funding could be offered subject to certain qualifications being met and that this applied to both smaller and larger projects.

Following the discussion, it was

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.

79. CELEBRATION OF HUNTINGDONSHIRE, LINKED TO HUNTINGDONSHIRE FUTURES

By means of a report and a presentation by the Assistant Director (Strategic Insights and Delivery), (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book), the Celebration of Huntingdonshire, linked to Huntingdonshire Futures was presented to the Panel.

Following questions from Councillors Harvey and Gleadow, the Panel heard that there had been excellent engagement with local communities and parishes and that this was intrinsic in developing the Strategy and moving forward.

Concern was expressed by Councillor Slade about the timescales involved in applying for funding, however the Panel were assured that processes were being developed to ensure that the process would be as straightforward and swift as possible.

After further questions from Councillors Harvey and Gardener it was confirmed that several channels of communication, including a webpage, would be used to ensure parishes and communities were aware of the process.

80. REVISED 2024/25 BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2025/26 TO 2028/29

By means of an Appendix by the Head of Finance, (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the revised 2024/25 Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy was presented to the Panel.

The revised Town and Parish Precept values were brought to the Panel's attention, following which the Panel noted the amendments made to the document.

Chair