

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS) held in Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Thursday, 8 June 2023.

PRESENT: Councillor J E Kerr – Chair.

Councillors T Alban, M J Burke, S Bywater,
J E Harvey, M Kadewere, C Lowe,
S R McAdam and D J Shaw.

APOLOGYIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors S Cawley, S J Criswell and N J Hunt.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors S J Conboy, L Davenport-Ray and Councillor S L Taylor.

4. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8th June 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor Harvey declared a Non-Registerable Interest under Minute 23/7 as a non-playing member of Huntingdon Cricket Club.

6. 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 June 2023 to 30th September 2023.

The Panel were advised that a joint meeting of both Overview and Scrutiny Panels would be convened on 6th July 2023 to discuss the Green Bins report.

7. INDOOR AND BUILT SPORTS FACILITIES STRATEGY AND PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY

By means of a report by the Sports Development Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Indoor and Built Sports Facilities Strategy and Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy was presented to the Panel.

Following a question from Councillor Alban, the Panel heard that in house assessments had been undertaken in recent years and were available on the Council's website. The Panel were also advised that the work undertaken on the assessment being considered had cost in the region of £37,000, however this assessment has been endorsed

by Sport England and will help the Council make informed decisions across many of its services such as Planning. By creating the independent and verified report, ensured a robust report which would support these decisions.

In response to a question from Councillor Bywater, the Panel were advised that independent sports clubs and external partners could use the report to apply for available funding across the leisure sector. In particular it was mentioned that the Leisure team were in contact with the operators of the Sawtry swimming pool and would support them with their funding bid to Sport England.

The Panel also heard, following a further question from Councillor Bywater, that Outdoor Gyms would be added to the Action Plan which would be developed following the approval of the report. Councillor Lowe added an observation that, in her experience, some Parish Councils had purchased outdoor gym equipment and located this within the park facilities that they maintain.

The Panel were advised that a future review of the One Leisure swimming pools would be undertaken and that this would include the supporting operational plan for energy efficiency purposes. This review will aim to align with the Council's Climate Strategy.

Councillor Shaw observed that the report made mention of facilities outside of the district within a 30 minute radius, and enquired where the 30 minutes was measured from. The Panel were advised that this detail would be sought and reported back at a future date.

Councillor Alban expressed concern surrounding the discrepancies that the Panel had observed within the report considering the cost. The Panel were advised that the consultants had been very supportive and would feed this back to them.

Councillor Shaw drew attention to what appeared to be conflicting information surrounding the number of Badminton courts at Hinchingsbrooke, the Panel were advised that this would be checked and the findings reported back to the Panel.

The Panel heard, following an enquiry from Councillor Alban, that the Athletics track at the One Leisure St Ives Outdoor Centre once again had England Athletics accreditation. The officer advised that the industry had recognised national issues within these type of facilities and had revised their accreditation criteria accordingly. The Panel were also advised that although the infield space within the track was used for athletics, it can also be used for mini soccer outside of the athletics season.

In response to concerns from Councillor Alban relating to the promotion of the Courts For Kids scheme at One Leisure centres, the Panel were advised that the scheme was still available and that the promotional schedule would be communicated to Councillors.

The Panel were advised that running clubs were consulted during the formation of the report, however the officers would check how non track based running clubs had been referenced in the report with the consultants.

In response to a further question from Councillor Shaw, the Panel were advised that whilst a full audit had been undertaken of parish, community and village halls, further input would be sought from those facilities to ensure that availability details be included, allowing for other groups to get the full benefit of the report and therefore utilise the report to subsequently apply for their own funding if required.

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.

8. OXFORD TO CAMBRIDGE PAN_REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP

By means of a report by the Interim Managing Director (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Oxford to Cambridge Pan-Regional Partnership Report was presented to the Panel.

Councillor Kerr enquired on the differences between the proposal and the previous OxCamb Arc, following which, the Panel heard the previous group was no longer in existence. The Panel were reassured that the new proposal was a lot leaner, which a much clearer focus on the environmental benefits for the area.

In response to a question from Councillor Alban, the Panel heard that whilst the Council did not expect to have representatives on every board, the opportunity for Hunts to have a strong voice would remain. The Panel were assured that recent concerns expressed by Bedfordshire residents were linked to an East-West Rail project, and not linked with this proposal which would seek strong community engagement.

Councillor Shaw observed a £10,000 commitment for the coming year and enquired what this would look like in the future. The Panel heard that whilst this was still unknown, the Council would be able to monitor the benefits of the Partnership and an exit strategy would be in place without financial penalty should it be required.

Following a query from Councillor Kerr about what benefits Council involvement in the Partnership would bring, the Panel heard that this would be monitored in relation to the twin priorities of economic growth and environmental benefit, involvement within the Partnership would allow the Council to be part of the conversation, and thus allow for input and influence as part of that.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Bywater regarding anticipated timescales, the Panel heard that draft versions were in development with the expectation of being concluded by the Autumn. As part of the action planning and progress forward, the Panel would be kept updated.

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.

9. ALTERNATIVE LAND MANAGEMENT

By means of a presentation by the Operations Manager Environmental Services (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book) Alternative Land Management was presented to the Panel.

The Panel were given detailed presentation and background to the scheme by the Executive Councillor for Climate and Environment.

Following a question from Councillor Shaw, the Panel heard that the scheme would be constantly reviewed to see where improvements could be made but that the Council aspired to having 25% of the land it manages within the scheme by 2027.

Councillor Bywater commented that whilst he was in support of biodiversity throughout the district, but several concerns have arisen from residents which could have been managed with better communications. He expressed further concerns on how this scheme would work within urban areas and also gave examples of issues which had already arisen within his own ward. The Panel were assured that the team would continually monitor areas to ensure that residents and nature can exist in harmony, it was also expressed that by trialling the scheme now, assessments can be made later in the year about where this has been successful and where it has not. The Panel were further assured that if they were aware of specific issues, to pass those to the team so that they could be managed and resolved.

In response to a question from Councillor McAdam who expressed concerns over the scheme leading to an increase in fly tipping, the Panel heard that the Street Cleansing team do an excellent job across the district to manage this issue. They will continue to act on any reports of this activity and this will be reviewed at the end of the season to ascertain its impact.

Councillor Alban expressed concern that some parishes seemed more informed on the scheme than others and observed that this relationship needed to be developed to ensure open and two way communication links, however he also praised the forward and alternative thinking which had led to the schemes implementation.

Following a further concern from Councillor Alban, the Panel heard that the team collaborate with National Highways to ensure management of litter picking alongside roadside maintenance and mowing, however the safety of the team is paramount. In response to a further question on littering from Councillor Lowe, the Panel heard that the team regularly work with both volunteers and national campaigns to keep the district tidy and that the Waste Minimisation team undertake educational work.

The Panel heard, following a question from Councillor Shaw, that on

balance the majority of feedback received so far has been positive along with constructive criticism.

10. CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL HEALTH COMMITTEE

The appointment of Councillor McAdam as a non-voting co-opted Member to the Cambridgeshire County Council Health Committee and Councillor Kerr as substitute was unanimously agreed.

11. 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