

# HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the LICENSING AND PROTECTION COMMITTEE held in the GROUND FLOOR MEETING ROOMS (CONINGSBY & BOURN), PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, PE29 3TN on Thursday, 27 June 2024

PRESENT: Councillor N Wells – Chair.

Councillors B S Banks, M L Beuttell, A E Costello, S W Ferguson, I D Gardener, P A Jordan, P Kadewere and D Terry.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors S Bywater, S J Criswell and S A Howell.

## **4 MEMBERS INTERESTS**

No declarations were received.

## **5 PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDER (EYNESBURY)**

With the assistance of a report by the Community Protection and Enforcement Team Leader (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Committee considered a proposal for the implementation of a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) in response to increasing concerns in relation to anti-social behaviour in the Eynesbury area of St Neots, predominantly attributed towards temporary accommodation guests staying at the Nags Head Hotel on Berkley Street, Eynesbury.

The Committee were advised of the background to the proposal, together with the types of behaviours which residents and visitors to the area were experiencing. Information on the efforts which had already been undertaken to address the issues arising within the locality was also provided. Members attention was then drawn to the enforcement options which were available to the District Council to address this anti-social behaviour under the Crime and Policing Act 2014, and which had been considered in determining the preferred option for addressing the issues in the area.

Members were informed that a public consultation had been carried out between 30th May to 14th June 2024 on the proposal which had produced 48 responses. Forty-seven of which had been in support of the proposed PSPO and the proposed conditions. Attention was then drawn to the risks associated with the PSPO should it be considered, which are outlined in detail in Section 4.2 of the report.

The Committee were informed that enforcement of the proposed PSPO for Eynesbury would utilise resources from Cambridgeshire Constabulary and the District Council's Community Protection and Enforcement Team.

In discussing the proposals and the options presented to them, the Committee were informed that monthly meetings would be held between the Police and the District Council to review the enforcement and the efficacy of the conditions in reducing anti-social behaviour in the area. If it was found not to be effective, consideration could be given to utilising alternative methods of Anti-Social legislation. Confirmation was also sought as to the effectiveness of PSPOs in other areas in reducing anti-social behaviours and the Committee were advised that there were examples of other authorities, including the District Council utilising them for all sorts of issues in a successful manner.

Members commented on the likelihood of collecting any fixed penalty fines given the financial status of the majority of perpetrators and it was explained that in most cases officers would be seeking prosecutions.

Clarification was also sought on the funding which had been made available for the deployable CCTV cameras. Members were informed that funding had been secured for 6 months and it was hoped that this would be replaced by further grant funding going forward should the PSPO prove to be effective. Comment was also made regarding the potential to seek funding / support from other authorities who were placing individuals in the area. In response to which the Executive Councillor explained the process under which local authorities placed individuals in overflow temporary accommodation outside of their authority area and reiterated that such individuals remained under the control of that authority and the District Council could not influence the way in which that authority operated.

Councillor D Terry as Ward Councillor for Eynesbury reported on the concerns of local residents which related specifically to what would happen if the PSPO failed to have an impact on the anti-social behaviour being experienced. He suggested there was a need for the Committee to review the matter again in due course. In response, the Executive Councillor reported that he and Councillor S Taylor the ward councillor had met with local residents and had offered to meet with them again one month after implementation. He also reiterated that PSPOs have been successful in other areas.

The Committee were informed that should the implementation of the Order be approved; Officers could immediately commence enforcement activities against low level behaviours which breached the conditions. It was also reported that the Chief of Police and the Police and Crime Commissioner were fully supportive of the proposal, so Members could be confident that enforcement agencies would be doing whatever they could to tackle the problems within the area. The Committee were also reminded that District Councils could only operate within the parameters of their legislation powers and whilst a closure order had been considered this would only be a temporary solution to the issue. In the longer term, extensive planning for contingencies would need to be put in place to prevent behaviours reoccurring after a Closure Order expires.

In addressing the Committee on the matter, the Executive Councillor for Resident Services and Corporate Services outlined his view that the adoption and implementation of the Public Space Protection Order was a proportionate measure to address the concerns of local residents. He also drew attention to the Council's record in preventing homelessness and reducing the number of

families in temporary accommodation. Whilst the Council needed to assist people into temporary accommodation, the Council also needed to provide assistance to residents within the surrounding areas. Having indicated his support for the proposed implementation of the Order given the clear scale of the response to the consultation, Councillor Ferguson outlined his opinion that to pursue a closure order at this stage would be premature and the proposal represented the best option at this stage given the current circumstances. He also reiterated his intention to review its implementation on a monthly basis with residents and thanked the District Council's enforcement team for bringing the option forward.

Whereupon given the significance of the issue and having agreed that Members would like to receive an update at their next meeting to enable them to review the effectiveness of the operation of the Order since its implementation, it was

#### RESOLVED

- a) that the proposed Public Space Protection Order for Eynesbury be approved;
- b) that the proposed Public Space Protection Order location (as outlined in Appendix A to the report now submitted) is suitable;
- c) that the proposed Public Space Protection Order conditions (as outlined in Appendix B to the report now submitted) are suitable;
- d) that the proposed Public Space Protection Order should be put in place for 3 years, with annual review; and
- e) that authority be delegated to the Chief Operating Officer after consultation with the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Community Services to make minor amendments or variations to the conditions and scope of the Order; and
- f) that a further update on the situation be presented to the Committee's next meeting in October 2024.

Chair