

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, 5 June 2025.

PRESENT: Councillor N J Hunt – Chair.

Councillors T Alban, S Bywater, S J Criswell, M A Hassall, M Kadewere, C Lowe, B M Pitt, D J Shaw and N Wells.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors S Mokbul and D Terry.

IN ATTENDANCE: N/A .

4. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 3rd April 2025 and 15th May 2025 were approved as a correct record of the meetings held and were signed by the Chair.

5. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

6. 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 and Notice of Key Decisions for the period 1st June 2025 to 31st August 2025 were presented to the Panel.

The Panel were advised of a report relating to the Paxton Pits Contract Renewal which was due in the democratic cycle of meetings in July 2025. There was debate as to the merit of this being brought to the Panel as there may be limited scope to scrutinise. It was agreed to ascertain further details regarding the nature of the extension and to progress the democratic path following this.

Councillor Alban requested that a Councillor visit to the Great Fen be arranged, it was agreed that this would be for all Members rather than limited to the Panel.

7. QUESTIONS REQUIRING A RESPONSE

The Panel noted the answers given to questions outstanding from previous meetings.

8. CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL HEALTH COMMITTEE

There were no volunteers from the Panel to be appointed as a non-voting co-opted member or as a substitute member for the Cambridgeshire County Council Health Committee. It was agreed that this would be passed to the Leader to make appointments on behalf of the Panel.

9. ONE LEISURE SOLAR INSTALLATIONS 2025

By means of a report and presentation by the Facilities Manager – Hard Services (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book), an update on the One Leisure Solar Installations 2025 was presented to the Panel.

The Panel were advised that the CO2 savings quoted were based on energy savings and that the CO2 payback for the One Leisure St Ives (OLSI) canopy was expected to be five years.

It was noted by the Panel that the shared usage of the OLSI carpark with the neighbouring school had been considered and taken into account with the design of the canopy. It was further confirmed that the solar panel layouts maximised available space on the One Leisure Centre roofs and took into account maintenance access, flues and ensured a one metre strip was left at the edge of the roof.

The Panel heard that the solar panels had been sourced from China due to costs but that they had been installed by regional contractors. Further work in this area would consider both monetary and social value costs as part of the tender process.

It was clarified to the Panel that the energy generated by the solar panels was dependant on the sun but that energy storage options along with selling energy back to the grid would be considered in due course. It was noted that the knowledge gained from the project was being shared collaboratively with other local authorities and businesses.

10. CLIMATE REPORT QUARTER 4

By means of a report and presentation by the Climate Co-ordinator (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book), the Climate Report Quarter 4 was presented to the Panel.

It was clarified to the Panel that whilst financial contributions had previously been made to the Great Fen project, none were made in the 2024/25 financial year.

It was observed that research suggested that honeybee hives should be spaced 1km apart to increase biodiversity and noted that there were hives within Hinchingsbrooke Country Park. The Officer undertook to investigate this matter further and to liaise with the hive owners should dispersal across the site be required.

The Panel heard that the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority had previously had funding available for Net Zero projects however following the change in the Mayor, funding for such

projects was not expected for the current year. However the team were constantly investigating alternative funding opportunities and would continue to do so and to bring awareness to them as appropriate.

The Panel expressed their enthusiasm towards the projects both in progress and completed, however it was requested that future updates include a monetary saving as well as the environmental benefits. Overall, the Panel agreed that it was great to see an evidence led approach with collaborative working across the chamber for the benefit of the district and its residents.

11. COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WEALTH BUILDING

By means of a report and presentation by the Public Protection Manager (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book), an update on Community Health and Wealth Building was presented to the Panel.

Concern was expressed about residents in rural villages along the districts borders in particular the lack of public transport to these areas which affected residents of all ages. It was noted that it was good to see projects relating to employment, especially for young people and school leavers.

The Panel queried the social value engine challenge and how the social return on investment would be ascertained. It was noted that this was in its infancy but that further details would be made available to Members in due course as the project progressed. It was further advised that this method was used by other Councils and helped distinguish a likely return on investment, thus allowing Officers to make an informed decision on the value projects would provide. It was also advised that the tool would allow projects to be geotagged therefore flagging to local ward Members for their involvement if appropriate.

The impact of social inclusion for young people, in particular school leavers was discussed, with importance being given to a pathway to employment, improvements to mental health, physical activity and social connections.

The Panel also discussed creating a legacy with projects which would then continue beyond the funding and creating spaces and opportunities for communities to come together across all age groups.