

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, 6 November 2025.

PRESENT: Councillor N J Hunt – Chair.
Councillors T Alban, S Bywater, 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 J Criswell, M A Hassall, S Mokbul and D Terry.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors S W Ferguson and J E Kerr.

29. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 2nd October 2025 were approved as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

30. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

31. 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 November 2025 to 28th February 2026 were presented to the Panel.

32. PLAY SUFFICIENCY

By means of a report by the Head of Leisure, Health and Environment (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the Sustainable Framework for Play in Huntingdonshire Report was presented to the Panel.

The content of the report was praised by the Panel and it was observed that an understanding of how the inclusive equipment at Hinchingbrooke Country Park could be accessed was helpful. Comment was made on the gym style equipment installed in many parks across the district observing that it is rare to be seen in use. The Panel heard that the One Leisure Active Lifestyles team were in the process of creating demonstration videos which residents could access via the One Leisure website and via QR codes to encourage usage of the equipment.

It was observed that often small pockets of play equipment would be

installed by developers and it was enquired whether there was opportunity to create a more collaborative and cohesive approach in parishes to link projects into a larger and well funded park rather than several smaller parklets in order to better serve communities. The Panel heard that work was underway to better link opportunities through a collaborative approach from Leisure and Planning in order to efficiently create a better developed outcome for residents. The Panel heard that community engagement would be key to the future development of the framework.

The Panel were advised that in a drive to increase footfall and become more financially sustainable, the team would look at opportunities for secondary spend, with the example of the café at Hinchingbrooke Country Park being given.

It was noted that play areas were vital in providing opportunities to form social connections within local communities. Councillor Pitt encouraged the Council to be more ambitious than the three flagship sites named within the report, in response to which the Panel heard that further opportunities would be developed once funding streams had been secured and that external funding opportunities would also be explored.

Following enquiries in relation to proposed engagement with young people, the Panel heard that the team's ambitions for engagement with young people were outlined within the report and that further detail on this would be developed as the relevant projects progress.

The Panel heard that ward members would be looped into further engagement opportunities with their local communities as projects were developed.

The Panel requested that further updates on the progress illustrated in the report be brought back to the Panel in due course and it was agreed that this would be added to the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for Autumn 2026.

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 within the report.

33. COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT 2026/27

By means of a report by the Revenues and Benefits Manager (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the Council Tax Support 2026/27 Report was presented to the Panel.

The Panel heard that the scheme also provided an administrative benefit to the team in addition to the benefits it provided to residents.

It was also advised that the Council Tax Support Scheme had been fully planned and budgeted, and was in line with forecast for the year.

It was clarified to the Panel that the previous response times had included automated responses although not to the same degree as currently. It was also noted that there were several reasons why changes were not able to be immediately implemented and that a human element had to be considered however the Panel were also assured that all response times were closely monitored.

The Chair reflected on an excellent report and praised the principles implemented by the joint administration. The Panel further heard that despite the risks of the scheme, the dedication and hard work of the team ensured its smooth implementational.

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 within the report.

Chair