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## Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance)

Report of the meetings held on 9th December 2003  
and 13th January 2004

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### Matters for Information

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#### 44. RECLASSIFICATION OF BY-WAYS

The Panel has received a presentation from County Council representatives on issues relating to the reclassification of by-ways in the District.

As part of the presentation, the Panel was informed of the status of by-ways open to all traffic (BOATS), the procedure for issuing temporary traffic regulation orders to regulate usage in wet weather conditions and the downgrading of BOATS to prevent use by motorised vehicles.

Having been informed that downgrading can only occur if it is proven that a by-way is unnecessary, the Panel has expressed its concern over the need for the protection of those by-ways which are increasingly being damaged by four-by-four vehicles. This situation is exacerbated by the limited length of time which temporary traffic regulation orders preventing vehicular use can be in existence each year and the availability of County Council funds to reinstate those by-ways which are damaged by vehicle drivers.

The Panel has discussed the advice which Members can provide to Parish Councils concerned about usage of particular rights of way and been advised that, in the first instance, a Parish Council should approach the County Council who would then examine each situation on a case by case basis. Officers would subsequently attempt to secure improvements by negotiation or temporary closure before considering downgrading as a final resort.

#### 45. HUNTINGDONSHIRE CAR PARKING STRATEGY 2004 – 2016

In conjunction with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery and Resources) the Panel has considered the draft Car Parking Strategy for 2004 – 2016.

The Panel has discussed the length of the consultation process, the costs involved in the decking of town centre car parks and the relationship of the Strategy with the market town transport strategies.

The Panel has also questioned the efforts being made to reduce reliance on cars as a means of transportation and been informed that the rapid transit system and the implementation of Green Travel Plans are likely to have some impact.

The Panel has also discussed the proposed level of car parking charges and the possibility of workplace charging. It has been pointed out that the Strategy needs to balance the desirability of increasing the use of public transport and reducing reliance on the car against the danger of deterring motorists from shopping, etc. in the market towns. Concerns have been expressed that increased charges might encourage long stay parking in residential areas, as a result of which the Panel was informed that consideration could be given to the introduction of parking restrictions in particular problem areas although this is reliant upon action by the County Council as the Highways Authority.

Consideration has also been given by the Panel to expenditure on car parking improvements, parking provision at the railway stations in the District and the level of short term parking in St Ives.

#### **46. RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

The Panel has considered the Council's draft Risk Management Strategy for the Council prior to its submission to the Cabinet.

Having noted that the Strategy has been developed as a means of formalising and developing the Council's present risk management arrangements, the Panel was informed that authorities are required to demonstrate for the purpose of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment and compliance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations that a Strategy had been approved and implemented.

The Panel has also noted that work is currently underway in reviewing the Council's disaster and recovery plans, a report upon which will be submitted to a future meeting of the Panel. Having noted the proposed role for the Panel in reviewing the effectiveness of the Risk Management Strategy once it has been adopted, the Panel has informed the Cabinet that it has no objection to the proposed Risk Management Strategy and its role in monitoring its future effectiveness.

#### **47. PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

In conjunction with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery and Resources), the Panel has reviewed progress in the implementation of Service Improvement Plans arising from the Best Value Review programme and Best Value Performance Indicators.

In considering the BVPIs, the Panel has discussed those indicators which appeared to be inconsistent with best quartile and audit targets and trends compared with previous years. These include the cost of planning per head of population and waste collection per household, the number of standard searches completed within ten working days

and the percentage of local authority buildings open to the public. The Panel has requested Councillors P G Mitchell and C W Looker to investigate their concerns in relation to the cost of planning in comparison with the best quartile statistics and to report back to a future meeting.

#### **48. THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

The Panel has considered proposals to update the Council's Corporate Plan and to develop of a comprehensive performance management framework.

In considering the proposed vision for the Plan, its aims and objectives and the priorities proposed for inclusion, the Panel has commented on the terminology within the document and the importance of including a reference to democratic participation within the Plan.

#### **49. COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT: PEER CHALLENGE AND SELF-ASSESSMENT**

In conjunction with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery and Resources), the Panel has reviewed the recent report by the peer challenge team and the Council's draft self-assessment submission which is required as part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

The Panel has discussed the self-scoring mechanism used in the self-assessment document and commented upon the limitations for variation within the mechanism. In so doing, the Panel has also forwarded its comments on the provisional scores in the document to the Cabinet.

The Panel has considered the action plan for the self assessment submission and proposed that the section entitled "Revisions to the Constitution" should incorporate a reference to Member development. The Panel has also commented on the need to continue to implement the actions identified within the Overview and Scrutiny development programme and been informed of the interest expressed in the programme by South Kesteven District Council.

A meeting between representatives of South Kesteven Council and the Panel Chairman and Vice Chairman has subsequently been arranged for 9th February 2004.

#### **50. SUBSTANCE MISUSE IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE**

Further to Item No.35 of their Report to the meeting of the Council held on 10th December 2003, the Panel has continued its study into substance misuse in the District. Following a review of the information collated to date by Councillors Newman and Wallis, the Panel has received a report inviting Members to consider what action they wish to take in relation to the study. Under the circumstances, it has been agreed that the Chairman of the Community Safety

Partnership and the Executive Councillor with responsibility for Community Safety be invited to attend a future meeting to discuss the Panel's provisional conclusions.

**51. BEST VALUE REVIEWS – PROGRESS**

The Panel has monitored the progress of the Best Value Reviews within its remit.

**52. WORKPLAN STUDIES**

The Panel has reviewed its work plan on studies and agreed that future study areas should include -

- ◆ Member development
- ◆ The Council's charging policies
- ◆ The Council's Green Travel Plan

Councillor C W Looker has also been requested to give preliminary consideration to the current level of expenditure on ICT services and to report back to the Panel.

**53. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 – FORWARD PLAN**

The Panel has been acquainted with details of the Forward Plan and forthcoming key decisions, which has been prepared by the Leader of the Council.

**54. PROGRESS**

The Panel has been apprised of the progress of actions required as a result of its previous decisions.

**55. SCRUTINY**

The Panel has considered the latest editions of the Decision Digest. A number of queries raised with a regard to items appearing in the digest have been answered to the Panel's satisfaction.

P A Swales  
Chairman