

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (PERFORMANCE AND GROWTH) held in the Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 5th February 2020

PRESENT: Councillor D B Dew – Chairman.

Councillors B S Chapman, S J Corney, J W Davies, Dr P L R Gaskin, M S Grice, J P Morris, S Wakeford and D J Wells.

APOLOGY: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor K P Gulson.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors R Fuller, J A Gray and K I Prentice.

51 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8th January 2020 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

52 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor S J Corney declared a non-statutory disclosable interest in relation to Minute Number 54 as Ramsey Town Mayor and his involvement with the Prospectus for Growth for Ramsey.

53 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 Minute Book) which has been prepared by the Executive Leader for the period 1st February 2020 to 31st May 2020.

54 PROSPECTUS' FOR GROWTH - HUNTINGDON, ST IVES AND RAMSEY

With the aid of a report by the Service Manager – Growth (a copy of which has been appended in the Minute Book) the Prospectuses for Growth (PFG) for Huntingdon, St Ives and Ramsey were presented to the Panel. The Executive Councillor for Housing, Planning and Economic Development introduced the report and in doing so reminded Members that the PFG are Combined Authority documents and are currently in draft form. The PFG have been developed by Town Teams but there have been opportunities for Members to get involved to shape and develop them.

Councillor Corney mentioned that, as a Town Councillor, he was disappointed about the split of funds, however he recognised what the situation was and it was up to those involved to embrace the PFG. A further concern was raised by Councillor Chapman that the costs would spiral. In response the Panel was

informed that each town would have up to £500k to bid for but that it is designed as seed funding. It was recognised that as St Neots was first the town has done well in terms of money invested.

A comment was raised by Councillor Chapman that the PFG could have more detail on digital infrastructure. There was general agreement that there should be more on digital infrastructure and the Executive Councillor added that he would like to see the Cambridge Effect become the Cambridgeshire Effect.

Councillor Chapman asked a question on the structure of the Town Teams and the governance arrangements in place. In response Members were informed that governance arrangements would be the subject of future discussions. Councillor Wells added that he thought the mixture of Councillors and people from the community worked well during the St Neots Masterplan process.

The proposed long-term removal of the ring road in Huntingdon was raised by Councillor Wakeford. He added that without additional detail and with reliance on it, a proposal to remove it could cause alarm. The Executive Councillor informed the Panel that the consultants who have written the PFG have done so using an economic point of view. It was stressed that without Highways Authority input, it was difficult to understand how feasible the proposal was.

A comment was made by Councillor Morris that there are no Action Plans included with the PFG and no reference to the Cambridgeshire wide Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. The Executive Councillor informed the Panel that the PFG were aspirational documents and should not seek to control matters that would be for planning policy. It would be up to Town Teams to take forward the ideas they want.

Members enquired about the pedestrianisation of Godmanchester Bridge. It was noted that the Prospectus for Growth for Huntingdon did not mention it as the Town Team has not considered the idea. The Executive Councillor suggested that the Combined Authority should be encouraged to take a view on the Godmanchester Bridge.

RESOLVED

- a) that the Panel's comments on the report and appendices be conveyed to the Cabinet, and
- b) the Cabinet be recommended to delegate authority to finalise the Council's comments to the Service Manager – Growth in consultation with the Executive Leader and Deputy Executive Leader, Managing Director and Corporate Director (Place).

(At 7.08pm, during the discussion of this item, Councillor J A Gray entered the meeting.)

55 INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE REPORT 2019/20 - QUARTER 3

With the aid of a report by the Business Intelligence and Performance Manager and Finance Manager (a copy of which has been appended in the Minute Book), the Integrated Performance of the Council 2019/20, Quarter 3 was presented to the Panel. The Executive Leader introduced the report and informed the Panel

that responsibility for the Council's performance lies with himself and the Deputy Executive Leader.

Councillor Gaskin asked whether the energy use rise (performance indicator 29) could be attributed to another factor other than bad weather. The Member was assured that after analysing the data, the explanation of bad weather was correct. Continuing the theme of energy usage, Councillor Gaskin commented that he thought Council Anywhere would have a beneficial impact upon energy use as Officers chose to work from home more often. In response, the Chief Operating Officer informed Members that the Council was currently rolling out laptops to Officers, but it was anticipated that as Officers choose to work from home more often that would have a beneficial impact upon energy use in next year's performance report.

Concern was raised that 71% of the Staff Survey results were worse than the 2018 results (performance indicator 34c). The Panel was informed that this could be because the response rate was higher in. Members were assured by the Chief Operating Officer that the Staff Survey results had been reviewed at length by the Employment Committee. The Panel was reminded that 86% of the 2019 results remained better than the 2017 results.

Members were concerned that the new parking machines were taking longer than anticipated to install. It was explained that installation at earlier sites had highlighted a number of issues which needed resolving before proceeding with subsequent installations. In addition, the contractor due to carry out the installation was taken over which caused a delay. Although the Executive Leader noted that where the new car parking machines have been installed the dwell times have increased.

A discussion ensued regarding parking charges, which were forecast to produce a £1.5m surplus this year. It was confirmed by the Executive Leader and the Executive Councillor for Resources that this was down on the forecast due to £34k expenditure on the staggered delivery of the new car parking machines and £40k on the free after three initiative in December.

Councillor Wakeford noted that the Council was significantly ahead of the target regarding homelessness preventions but wanted assurance that the Council would continue to treat the issue as a priority. In response, the Executive Leader stated that the issue remained a high priority for the Council and that there was a significant amount of resources dedicated to tackling the issue.

RESOLVED

that the Panel's comments on the progress made across the range of performance measures be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration alongside the Integrated Performance Report 2019/20, Quarter 3.

56 FINAL BUDGET 2020/21 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

With the aid of a report by the Finance Manager (a copy of which has been appended in the Minute Book), the Final Budget 2020/21 and Medium Term Financial Strategy were presented to the Panel. Members were informed that

there had been few changes since the draft was presented the previous month although the changes that have been made were listed in Appendix 2.

Following a query by Councillor Wakeford on the Overview and Scrutiny comments on the draft budget and whether they were considered, the Executive Councillor for Resources reassured the Panel that the comments were given full consideration before a decision was made.

When Councillor Wakeford questioned whether the Cabinet had considered the proposals in the alternative budget, the Executive Councillor commented as the report author was not in attendance when the item was considered, the Cabinet could only base their judgements upon the report and the Panel's comments on it. The Executive Councillor confirmed that the Cabinet concluded there were better options available than the ones presented by the alternative budget.

Councillor Morris asked the Executive Councillor to comment on a Hunts Post article on the proposed level of increase in Council Tax. In response, the Executive Councillor stated that the increase was beneath the average rise in local wages in Cambridgeshire and in line with the increase in the state pension and therefore remained affordable to residents.

Councillor Wakeford highlighted the lack of increase in One Leisure Fees and Charges and asked if it could be confirmed that because there was no increase in the budget, it did not necessarily mean there would not be an increase in charges during the calendar year. It was confirmed to the Panel that Councillor Wakeford's assumption was correct.

RESOLVED

- a) that the changes in Appendix 2 to the report now submitted be noted, and
- b) the Panel's comments be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration alongside the Final Budget 2020/21 and Medium Term Financial Strategy.

57 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

With the aid of a report by the Finance Manager (a copy of which has been appended in Minute Book) the Treasury Management Strategy was presented to the Panel. Members were informed that the Treasury Management Strategy was a prescribed set of documents that must be presented each year and that it set out a framework how the Council operated.

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be recommended to endorse the Treasury Management Strategy, the Capital Strategy, the Investment Strategy, the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement and the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy for submission to the Council.

58 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.

Councillor Chapman asked when the Panel would consider a review of parking. In response the Chairman confirmed that the Panel would wait until the roll out of the new parking machines was complete and had time to bed before considering whether to review parking.

Members agreed to invite a representative from the Combined Authority to attend a meeting of the Panel to discuss the skills agenda.

Chairman