

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (CUSTOMERS AND PARTNERSHIPS) held in the Countryside Centre, Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, Brampton Road, Huntingdon PE29 6DB on Thursday, 7 October 2021.

PRESENT: Councillor D M Tysoe – Chairman.

Councillors T D Alban, B S Banks, S J Criswell, Miss R D'Souza, I D Gardener, Mrs M Kadewere, H V Masson, C Smith, Mrs S Smith and Mrs S R Wilson.

APOLOGY: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor D A Giles.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors S Bywater and R Fuller.

18. MINUTES

In relation to Minute point 15, Councillor Wilson had expressed her disappointment in the meeting that preventative works had been slow in commencing and requested for this be recorded.

With this amendment, the Minutes of the meeting held on 8th July 2021 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

19. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

20. 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 the Minute Book) which has been prepared by the Executive Leader for the period 1st October 2021 to 31st January 2022.

21. OXCAM ENVIRONMENTAL PRINCIPLES

By means of a report by the Managing Director, (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the OxCam Environmental Principles report was presented to the Panel.

Councillor Alban expressed that he was thrilled and enthused with the target end date of 2040 for the implementation of these principles, the date instils confidence that the Council is looking to achieve these targets with a sense of urgency and also that the Council can play a part in enabling these principles across the community.

Councillor Wilson seconded this enthusiasm and questioned where resources would be diverted from as mentioned in 7.1 of the report. It

was assured by Councillor Fuller that this would be taken from underspends from other budget areas.

The report was praised by Councillor Criswell who observed that it built upon and formed a progression from previous green initiatives implemented by the Council. Councillor Criswell also observed that whilst a green environment is welcomed, commuting and local transport should also be considered including an aspiration for everything to be available for residents within a 15-minute radius of their homes. A joined-up approach to development would help to achieve a sustainable future.

Councillor Wilson suggested that the environmental principles be included in every new policy and plan adopted across the Council to ensure targets are met.

Councillor D'Souza commented on an exciting and ambitious paper and endorsed that the Council should influence the local community and help to educate local groups, enabling them to implement and adopt the principles in the community.

The Panel heard that a draft strategy was anticipated in Autumn 2022 to allow progression and implementation of the principles with sufficient rigor.

Having welcomed the report, the Panel thereupon

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be encouraged to endorse the recommendations contained within the report.

22. COMMUNITY TRANSITION STRATEGY 2021/23

By means of a report and presentation by the Corporate Director (People), (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book) the Community Transition Strategy was presented to the Panel.

The Panel heard from Julie Farrow (the Hunts Forum) and Anna Bradley-Dorman, (The Ramsey Neighbourhoods Trust) on the strong bonds and co-operation that had been developed between the Council and local community groups during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Councillor Criswell noted that Huntingdonshire District Council and the voluntary sector had worked well together to form a cohesive and swift response to the Covid-19 crisis. He observed that the relationship with town and parish councils was not always as robust but was hopeful that the proposed strategy would address this and create stronger partnerships for the future.

This sentiment was seconded by Councillor Banks, who stated how impressed he had been with the involvement of the volunteer organisations and that the strategy had provided an opportunity to form closer working relationships with parish and town councils to provide more resilience for the future.

Councillor Alban echoed this and was impressed at the rapid growth

in community resilience across the district over recent years, he hoped that this would now be harnessed and developed to allow for stronger communities in the future.

Councillor Tysoe observed that whilst local government responsibilities and functions can be complicated, residents aren't interested in the bureaucracy, they are more focused on achieving the end result, and noted that the strategy should help to achieve this.

Following a comment from Councillor D'Souza on data usage, the Corporate Director (People) reassured that the value of human contact can't be replaced but there are some who prefer the anonymity of digital. It was also noted that core to the strategy is the better use of data and technology enabling ongoing engagement and dialogue with residents which will result in the kind of common-sense service delivery for residents aspired to in the strategy.

Having welcomed the report, the Panel thereupon

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be encouraged to endorse the recommendations contained within the report.

23. CABINET FEEDBACK: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY FLOODING TASK AND FINISH STUDY

By means of a report by the Cabinet (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Cabinet's feedback to the Overview and Scrutiny Flooding Task and Finish Study was presented to the Panel.

The Panel heard that local communities had been contacted and encouraged to make contact with Cambridgeshire County Council for assistance in developing community resilience against future flooding.

In response to a question from Councillor Wilson regarding the slow progress of action in regards to flood prevention, the Panel were advised to lobby their relevant County Councillor to aid progress.

It was noted by the Executive leader that although the council are not the lead authority in regards to flood response, the theme of community leadership had been prevalent across the agenda. The council will continue to lobby Cambridgeshire County Council, Anglian Water and the Environment Agency to ensure they are held to account and the residents of Huntingdonshire are supported.

The Panel heard that riparian rights should be considered by residents and that ownership needed to be taken of those issues which occur along property boundaries where the responsible falls upon the resident or land owner.

24. CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL HEALTH COMMITTEE

The appointment of Councillor S Smith as a non-voting co-opted substitute Member to the Cambridgeshire County Council Health Committee was noted.

25. 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.

Chairman