

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS) held in Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Thursday, 2 February 2023.

PRESENT: Councillor J E Kerr – Chair.

Councillors T Alban, M J Burke, J E Harvey,
N J Hunt, M Kadewere, C Lowe,
S R McAdam, D J Shaw and G J Welton.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors S Bywater and S J Criswell.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors S W Ferguson and S L Taylor.

6. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 5th January 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

7. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

8. 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 February 2023 to 31st May 2023.

9. BUSINESS RATES DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF POLICY

By means of a report by the Council Tax and Business Rates Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Business Rates Discretionary Rate Relief Policy was presented to the Panel.

Following an enquiry from Councillor Alban on whether available support differed for rural or urban communities, the Panel heard that a wide range of support was available for businesses and would be applied appropriately.

It was clarified to the Panel after questions from Councillors Alban and McAdam, that charity shops receive mandatory relief and therefore the scheme does not apply to them. It was further clarified that there are notable differences between the help available for nationally recognised charities and non-profit

organisations however work is done with such groups to ensure the correct support is given.

Following questions from Councillor Shaw, the Panel were assured that whilst the departments aim was to be cost neutral, the team undertake extensive modelling to ensure that there are clear guidelines in order to support local communities. The strategy gives structure to the package of support already available for businesses.

The Panel were advised that only standalone public conveniences could be considered for support in response to a question from Councillor Shaw.

Following the discussion, it was thereupon

RESOLVED

that the comments of Overview and Scrutiny be passed to the Cabinet for consideration when making a decision on the recommendations contained within the report.

10. ONE LEISURE AND BURGESS HALL PROGRESS REVIEW

By means of a report and presentation by the Interim Head of Leisure (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book) the One Leisure and Burgess Hall Progress Review was presented to the Panel.

Following a question from Councillor Burke, the Panel heard that the One Leisure Active Lifestyles team work closely with Health colleagues to redefine what good health looks like. This includes preventative work, rehabilitation classes and working with partners such as social prescribers. The Panel heard that relationships with health colleagues have developed over time and continue to do so to the benefit of residents. Councillor Burke praised the fantastic work undertaken by the service and noted that this highlighted the importance of partnership working.

The Panel heard, following a question from Councillor Welton, that One Leisure Active Lifestyles classes covered a range of rehabilitation and maintenance classes, which were at a lower price point than regular fitness classes, it was noted that participants have the option to purchase a class pass at a discounted rate and that concessionary rates were also available. It was also noted that some cancer rehab classes were funded by the Hunts Network for the benefit of patients.

Councillor Alban observed the importance and success of Park Runs across the district and queried the status of the athletics track at the One Leisure Outdoor Centre. The Panel heard that

this facility is part of the Playing Pitch Strategy and is accredited by UK Athletics.

It was observed that due to an ageing population within the district, community based activities were thriving.

The Panel were advised that whilst an uptake in memberships is generally expected in January, the figures for this year had been better than anticipated. It was noted that One Leisure offers great value with the Platinum membership including gym, swimming, indoor cycling, fitness classes and off peak courts.

Councillor Shaw enquired how many users paid for sessions on a casual basis and the Panel were advised that this remained static alongside annual memberships. It was further advised that casual customers may benefit from a direct debit membership and that the team regularly undertook work to review this directly with customers.

Councillor Alban observed that some nationwide gym chains had moved into empty retail spaces both within and on the borders of the district and enquired how the team would react to this. The Panel heard that One Leisure have a wider offer than many national gym chains and also a large offer for families, however competitors would continue to be monitored for the benefit of future planning. It was further observed that One Leisure site locations offered the service security and afforded long term planning.

The Panel heard, following a question from Councillor Hunt, that many links were established with young people including pre-schoolers and children with special educational needs as well as a programme working with home schooled children.

Councillor Harvey enquired how the underperformance of group exercise classes was being address, following which, the Panel heard that this area had been affected by a nationwide post COVID trend where users had found alternative ways to access this type of activity. The service has observed a shift in the demographic accessing this activity and continued to monitor this to see what adjustments could be made in the future.

Councillor Alban enquired how admission details had been ascertained and the Panel were advised that this would be shared to the Panel following the meeting.

The Panel heard, following a question from Councillor Alban, that the Courts4Kids programme was available during school holidays and was promoted across a range of mediums.

The Panel thanked the team for their very detailed and insightful presentation.

11. 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.

The Panel were advised that the Climate Working Group would be assisting in the development of the Electrical Vehicle Strategy.

Chair