

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (PERFORMANCE AND GROWTH) held in Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 6 March 2024.

PRESENT: Councillor C M Gleadow – Chair.

Councillors A Blackwell, S Cawley,
S J Corney, J E Harvey, S A Howell,
R Martin, Dr M Pickering, R A Slade and
N Wells.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors I D Gardener and A R Jennings.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors S J Conboy and B A Mickelburgh.

65. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 31st January 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

66. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

67. RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The responses to questions arising from previous meetings were noted.

Councillor Pickering clarified that the issue with the Corporate Performance report layout was due to information being compiled together rather than on one page. The Officer was present at the meeting and was able to inform the Panel that this had been trialled and was not felt to be beneficial, however this would be further investigated and developed as appropriate.

68. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel received and noted the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme and the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions (a copy of which has been appended in the Minute Book) which had been prepared by the Executive Leader for the period 1st March 2024 to 30th June 2024.

69. CORPORATE PLAN REFRESH 2024

By means of a report by the Business Intelligence and Performance Manager, (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the

Corporate Plan Refresh 2024 report was presented to the Panel.

Following a question from Councillor Wells requesting detail on the fleet decarbonisation plan, the Panel heard that the Council was looking at alternative fuels whilst assessing the challenges of new technologies. More detail would be sought from the Portfolio Holder and reported back to the Panel at a later date.

In response to a question from Councillor Blackwell relating to the Operational Performance Measures, the Panel heard that sickness reporting would continue via the quarterly performance reports and Employment Committee and that a range of data would be gathered and analysed going forward and in turn would drive policy development.

The Panel heard, following a question from Councillor Cawley, that happiness would be measured via district level data from the Office for National Statistics.

Following a further question from Councillor Cawley, the Panel heard that reporting on reductions in carbon emissions would be reported via the Climate Strategy, however the Panel were assured that robust measures were in place. It was observed by Councillor Cawley that an overarching timescale for this work would be helpful and would help reassure residents that work was being undertaken.

Councillor Martin stated that it would be helpful to understand progress from the previous year's report, the Panel were advised that this would be incorporated within the quarter 4 Corporate Performance report.

The Panel were assured, in response to a query from Councillor Slade, that a robust communications plan was in place and that this sat alongside the Corporate Plan and would ensure that the right messages went to the right people at the right time.

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 contained within the report.

70. FINANCE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2023/24 QUARTER 3

By means of a report by the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources, (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the Finance Performance Report 2023/24 Quarter 3 report was presented to the Panel.

Following questions from Councillor Pickering, the Panel were assured that the refurbishment on the Fareham properties was in the snagging stage and due to come in within budget. The Panel were further assured that the vacant properties within the portfolio were not a cause for concern and that this was due to a quiet market rather than an issue with the properties themselves.

In response to a question from Councillor Harvey, the Panel heard that an increase in income at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park was due to increase in café sales and events at the site. The team were continuing to explore ways to maximise opportunities at the Park.

Councillor Harvey enquired what actions were being taken to recover outstanding historical rents owed to the Council, particularly in relation to commercial rents following which, the Panel heard that full details would be sought and reported back at a future date.

The Panel were advised, in response to a question from Councillor Harvey, that where tenants wished to, negotiations would be entered into to ensure practical rents were achieved whilst remaining commercially viable.

Councillor Martin expressed concern over the service gap for the Street Cleansing service, the Panel heard that a service contract had been lost in this area and work was ongoing to address the issue.

Following an observation from Councillor Slade about the street scene and state of properties in the Rowley Centre, St Neots, the Panel heard that a paper would be brought to a future meeting which would address the situation.

An observation was made by Councillor Blackwell that there was a discrepancy in the number of properties within the table in section 4.3 of the report. The Panel heard that this data would be checked and the resulting answer communicated back to the Panel.

The Panel were assured, following a further question from Councillor Blackwell, that some of the vacant properties were of benefit to the Council without being let. The Panel were advised that further details around the scenario would be brought to a future meeting of the Panel.

Councillor Martin enquired about the overspend forecast for Disabled Facilities Grant and asked for clarity because the Corporate Performance Report had indicated a backlog of DFGs which might suggest an underspend, the Panel heard that further details would be sought and brought to a future meeting of the Panel.

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 contained within the report.

71. AMENDED FEES & CHARGES SCHEDULE

By means of a report by the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources, (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the Amended Fees and Charges Schedule was presented to the Panel.

It was confirmed to the Panel, following an enquiry from Councillor

Pickering, that the revised schedule had been brought due to omitted fees and charges from the schedule brought to the Panel the previous month. The Panel heard that this was an administrative error and were assured that measures were in place to ensure it was not repeated.

Following the discussion, it was

RESOLVED

that the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel be passed to Council for their consideration when making a decision upon the recommendations contained within the report.

Chair