

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS) held in Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Thursday, 11 July 2024.

PRESENT: Councillor J E Kerr – Chair.

Councillors T Alban, S Bywater, S J Criswell, N J Hunt, M Kadewere, S R McAdam, S Mokbul, D J Shaw and C H Tevlin.

APOLOGIE): Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors M A Hassall.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors B M Pitt, S L Taylor and S Wakeford.

10. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11th July 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

11. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor S J Criswell declared an other registerable interest in Minute 24/15 by virtue of being a Cambridgeshire County Councillor.

Councillor N J Hunt declared an other registerable interest in Minute 24/16 by virtue of being an employee of the National Grid.

12. 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 and the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions which had been prepared by the Leader for the period 1st July 2024 to 31st October 2024 were presented to the Panel.

13. CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL HEALTH COMMITTEE

The appointment of Councillor Tevlin as a non-voting co-opted Member to the Cambridgeshire County Council Health Committee and Councillor Kerr as substitute was unanimously agreed.

14. LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING FUND ROUND 3

By means of a report by the Regeneration and Housing Delivery Manager (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the Local Authority Housing Fund Round 3 Report was presented to the Panel.

Councillor Shaw expressed his support for the scheme and enquired whether the appropriate volunteer groups had capacity to support these residents. In response to which, the Panel were assured that there was constant communication with volunteer groups who are in place to ensure support is provided.

Following an enquiry from Councillor Alban, it was clarified to the Panel that Temporary Accommodation was transitory short term accommodation and that Permanent Accommodation was a permanent tenancy agreement. It was further clarified that these accommodations were part funded by grants and partly by the Housing Associations, and that Huntingdonshire's investment in the project was limited to Officer time and resource.

In response to a question from Councillor Tevlin, it was confirmed that the plan contained within the report was fully scoped and funded and that as Home Office funding had already been utilised for other parts of the scheme, there was no reason to suggest that this would change with the continuation of the programme.

The Panel heard, in response to a question from Councillor McAdam, that the permanent accommodation properties secured for the scheme would be under ten years old. The Panel further heard that this round of the programme was a two year programme and would be very similar to the first round.

Following a question from Councillor Shaw, the Panel were advised that the Housing Associations had not requested additional funding from the Council to implement this programme but that any such requests would be assessed on a case by case basis.

Whereupon it was

RESOLVED

that the Panel's comments would be communicated to the Cabinet in order for an informed decision to be made on the report recommendations.

15. CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE

By means of a presentation by the Operations Manager – Parking and Market Services (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), Civil Parking Enforcement in Huntingdonshire was presented to the Panel.

In response to questions from Councillor Criswell, the Panel were assured that a remedial works package was in progress and that this would be completed by the start of the Enforcement. It was further clarified that this would be funded by the District Council, with a proportionate contribution from the County Council in line with amounts awarded to other District Councils within the County. The Panel heard that the District Council were committed to investing in this area in order to bring it up to scratch but that long term the responsibility for this would remain with the County Council.

Following concerns expressed by Councillor Bywater, the Panel were assured that this was a five year contract and that a review would be undertaken in year four to make an informed decision as to whether to renew the terms or to hand back to the County Council.

The Panel heard, following an enquiry by Councillor Alban, that the District Council had some enforcement powers and that other enforcement would be actioned by Cambridgeshire Constabulary, depending upon the area and type of restrictions.

In response to further questions from Councillor Alban and Councillor Shaw, the Panel were advised that the current maps were in the process of being digitised and that more detail would be provided to the Panel through the democratic process in due course.

Following a question from Councillor Mokbul, the Panel were advised that revenue from on street parking belonged to the County Council but that it was ringfenced to be reinvested in Highways projects.

It was clarified to the Panel, following a question from Councillor Shaw that the District Council were responsible for resident parking permits throughout the district and that there was not a specific business permit.

16. LOCAL AREA ENERGY PLAN

By means of a presentation by the Home Energy Reduction Officer (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the Local Area Energy Plan was presented to the Panel.

Following a question from Councillor Hunt, the Panel heard that the finished document would not have planning status but that it would be a useful tool for planners to help unlock growth in digital connectivity and energy.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Alban, the Panel heard that communication was ongoing with large organisations within the district, such as the RAF and Hinchingsbrooke Hospital to identify current and future need within the district. The Panel heard that the Council hoped to be an enabler in identifying need to UK Power Networks for delivery. The Panel also heard that the team continued to work with communities on localised schemes, such as the generation of hydro electric power at Little Paxton, and how to best develop these.

It was confirmed, following a query from Councillor Shaw, that the engagement piece of work would be outsourced and that this would run across the county as a broader project. The Panel also heard that community heating systems had been investigated and that these were mainly installed as a retrofit at the current time, however the development of this would be monitored to ensure there is opportunity to be included as a scenario within the plan. It was noted however that as a forward looking piece of work and with a move towards decarbonisation, the current opportunities for these types of system were in conflict with that goal.

Councillor Hunt expressed concern about the Council's ability to influence stakeholders and investors, following which, the Panel were assured that the Council's work would be linked to National Policy and would rely upon that being fed through.

17. GARDEN WASTE SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE UPDATE

By means of a report and presentation by the General Manager for Operations (copies of which were appended in the Minute Book), an update on the Garden Waste Subscription Service was presented to the Panel.

Councillor Bywater praised the hard work undertaken by the teams in implementing the service and requested that information on the additional tonnage to grey bins since the introduction of the service be provided to the Panel as it becomes available. In response to a further question from Councillor Bywater, the Panel heard that take up of Parish based communal bins had been mitigated by the take up of the service by individual residents. The Panel were also advised that the team were looking at multiple approaches for Parishes who wished to take up a communal bin offer and that further communication on this would be fed through to parishes.

Following a concern raised by Councillor Alban, the team would investigate whether an increased tonnage in the grey bins had increased frequency of refuse vehicles to be emptied.

The Panel heard, following an enquiry from Councillor Shaw, in the event of residents moving properties, that the system did not currently match green waste subscriptions with Council Tax records, however this could be done manually by residents contacting Customer Services.

The Panel were assured, following a query by Councillor Mokbul, that all those who had paid for the service would have a collection due to the electronic system even if they had not received their label sticker for the bin itself.

In response to a question from Councillor Hunt, the Panel heard that more details were being developed on a kerbside food waste collection and that the team were currently expecting an implementation date around Spring 2026.

The Panel heard, following a question from Councillor Alban, that although monthly payment options had been explored for the service, the administrative cost of this made them prohibitive.

Following a question from Councillor Tevlin, the Panel heard that only seven parishes had taken up the offer for communal bins.

In response to a question from Councillor Bywater about potential exemptions for ecclesiastical buildings, the Panel heard that this would be investigated and reported back to the Panel in the future.

18. COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WEALTH BUILDING STRATEGY PRINCIPLES

By means of a report and presentation by the Corporate Director (People) (copies of which were appended in the Minute Book), the Community Health and Wealth Building Strategy Principles were presented to the Panel.

In response to comments from Councillor Hunt, the Panel were advised that this Strategy would look to embed the factors within the community which would assist in establishing good mental health. The Panel also heard that the Strategy would be realistic in what the Council could have a direct impact and influence on, with the example being given of a focus on physical activity rather than health which would be lead by partners.

Following a question from Councillor Lowe on the lack of NHS dentists within the district, the Panel were advised that this was an area which had been raised as a concern with local health partners and that the Council would continue to do so.

In response to a question from Councillor Shaw, the Panel heard that local spending would encourage local commercial opportunities. The Strategy would look at ways to help develop pathways to ensure that the correct people were in the correct jobs and that they would be proactive with training and opportunities.

Councillor Mokbul expressed concern about the continued closure of the One Leisure creche facilities being a barrier to customers returning to the facilities post covid. The panel heard that accessibility was essential but that the facilities also needed to be financially sustainable. Councillor Mokbul also observed that there was a stigma around mental health issues within South Asian communities. The Panel heard that the team would continue to develop communications to ensure that they reached as many residents as possible.

Chair

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