

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 November 2024.

PRESENT: Councillor C M Gleadow – Chair.

Councillors A Blackwell, J R Catmur, B S Chapman, S J Corney, I D Gardener, S A Howell, A R Jennings, R Martin, Dr M Pickering, D Terry and N Wells.

APOLOGIES: No apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors S W Ferguson and B A Mickelburgh.

38. MINUTES

Following recent changes made to the Panel at the Council meeting held on 16th October 2024, the Chair thanked Councillor S Cawley for his previous work with the Panel and welcomed Councillor B Chapman to the Panel.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd October 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

39. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

40. 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 November 2024 to 28th February 2025 were presented to the Panel.

41. QUESTIONS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Councillor Jennings noted that there were two outstanding questions which were yet to be answered, and these were noted for a response to be gathered in due course. Following which the report with answers to questions asked at previous meetings was noted by the Panel.

42. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2024-25 QUARTER 2

By means of a report by the Assistant Director (Strategic Insights and Delivery) (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the Corporate Performance 2024/25 Quarter 2 Report was presented to

the Panel.

Concern was expressed about the achievability of PI21, following which the Panel were assured that the Operations team were confident that this target could be met and strict targets had been put in place to assist this. It was further confirmed that the missed bins were a mixture of the three bin types and that there wasn't a pattern to the issue.

In relation to PI24, the Panel heard, that two fly tipping prosecution cases were adjourned and that the reasons for this would be investigated and reported back to the Panel. In addition, the Panel heard that the long term sickness figures shown in the report were not unrealistic for a large organisation with a diverse range of services and a workforce with multiple needs. The Panel were further assured that a robust sickness procedure was in place to manage this and could culminate in dismissal as a final stage. It was observed that commentary within the report to highlight the number of serious long term illness cases would be useful to allow the Panel to understand the picture of those cases which were of concern and those which could be approached with empathy.

It was observed that there were discrepancies on the totals within the graph in PI19, the Panel heard that clarification would be sought and brought back to the Panel.

Concern was expressed that the Electrical Vehicle Charging project was not being implemented as quickly as had been originally communicated to residents. The Panel were assured that work was underway and detail about timescales would be sought and communicated back to the Panel.

It was clarified to the Panel that point 31 on page 47 of the agenda related to all work within the Market Towns Programme, it was also noted that an update on the Market Towns Programme was expected at the December meeting of the Panel. The Panel were advised that details on the removal of trees alongside the Riverside Park cycleways, noted in item 57, would be sought and brought back to the Panel.

Following the discussion, it was

RESOLVED

that the comments of the Panel would be added to the Council report to allow for visibility during their consideration of the report.

19:07 Councillors B Chapman and D Terry entered the meeting.

43. FINANCE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2024/25 QUARTER 2

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 2024/25 Quarter 2 Report was presented to the Panel.

Following a query as to which site was referred to under the

Community Resilience line within Appendix One (page 133 of the agenda pack) in reference to the transition from Places for People and the agreement of management of that site, the Panel heard that clarification would be sought and communicated back.

A possible discrepancy between the forecasted underspend on the revenue outturn figures from quarter 2 versus quarter 1 was observed and the Panel were advised that the detail would be sought and brought back for clarification.

It was noted that a separate amount of £1 million had previously been allocated to the Market Towns for St Neots project and questioned where that was now allocated within the budget. The Panel heard that the report was to show the accounts for the quarter, however this would be investigated and brought back to the Panel.

It was highlighted that the recorded underspend of £100,000 to the increased MRF contract contradicted with a later noted underspend due to late completion of the MRF contract. The Panel heard that this had been split out and reported as previously requested which was why it was now showing in a different fashion. The Panel were assured that plans were being implemented to ensure long term debt recovery on commercial rents be addressed and that this reported back in a future report to the Panel.

The Panel heard that additional National Insurance and wages costs which were showing in Table 3.2 were due to a previous computer error, in order to correct this, they had been put into the finance budget so that individual budgets would not be affected. It was observed that it was concerning that an underspend was predicted under the Planning salaries line and the Chair would endeavour to take this up with the portfolio holder.

A marked increase relating to Civil Parking Enforcement was observed by the Panel, it was advised that costs had been estimated within the CPE strategy development, however upon implementation the signs and lines required far more work than anticipated and the increase in cost was as a result of that.

The Panel heard that due to staff turnover and staff sickness within the CCTV team there had been an increased use of agency staff to cover vacancies during the recruitment period. The Panel were further advised that contracted staff and agency staff were budgeted for separately and that the underspend in one area had balanced the increased spend in the other with no detriment to the service.

Following the discussion, it was

RESOLVED

that the comments of the Panel would be added to the Council report to allow for visibility during their consideration of the report.

44. TREASURY MANAGEMENT 6 MONTH PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2024-25

By means of a report by the Director of Finance and Resources (a

copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the Treasury Management 6 Month Performance Review 2024/25 Report was presented to the Panel.

The Panel heard that, following the announcement of the government's Autumn budget, no immediate change was anticipated, however interest rates may stay higher for longer, due to possible higher levels of government borrowing, and also possible inflation pressures where higher interest rates might be used to control this pressure. But it was noted that it was too early to tell at this stage.

The Panel were advised that the detail within the report relating to the CIS portfolio was reported in the manner requested by the auditors.

Following a suggestion to decrease the rent in the empty units at the Rowley Centre to encourage tenants, the Panel heard that this was commercially sensitive and would be discussed within the item following.

Following the discussion, it was

RESOLVED

that the comments of the Panel would be added to the Council report to allow for visibility during their consideration of the report.

45. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the press and public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

46. COMMERCIAL INVESTMENT PROPERTY PORTFOLIO

The Panel gave consideration to an exempt report by the Strategic Property Asset Manager, (a copy of which was appended in the annex to the Minute Book), on the Commercial Investment Property Portfolio which was presented to the Panel.

Chair