

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, 5 March 2025.

PRESENT: Councillor C M Gleadow – Chair.

Councillors J Catmur, B S Chapman, S J Corney, A R Jennings, Dr M Pickering, B M Pitt, D Terry and N Wells.

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors S W Ferguson and S Wakeford.

60. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5th February 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

61. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor B Chapman declared an other registerable interest in minute 24/63 by virtue of being a St Neots Town Councillor.

Councillor S Corney declared an other registerable interest in minute 24/63 by virtue of being a Ramsey Town Councillor.

Councillor C Gleadow declared an other registerable interest in minute 24/63 by virtue of being a St Ives Town Councillor.

Councillor A Jennings declared an other registerable interest in minute 24/63 by virtue of being a member of the Priory Centre Building Development Group.

Councillor B Pitt declared an other registerable interest in minute 24/63 by virtue of being a St Neots Town Councillor.

Councillor D Terry declared an other registerable interest in minute 24/63 by virtue of being a St Neots Town Councillor.

Councillor N Wells declared an other registerable interest in minute 24/63 by virtue of being a St Ives Town Councillor.

Councillor B Chapman declared an other registerable interest in minute 24/65 by virtue of being a St Neots Town Councillor.

Councillor S Corney declared an other registerable interest in minute 24/65 by virtue of being a member of the Development Management Committee.

Councillor B Pitt declared an other registerable interest in minute 24/65 by virtue of being a St Neots Town Councillor.

Councillor D Terry declared an other registerable interest in minute 24/65 by virtue of being a St Neots Town Councillor.

62. 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.

It was requested that a group be formulated to look into the finances of the Green Waste Collection Service, the Democratic Services Officer agreed to assist with arranging to move this forward.

63. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 3 2024/25

By means of a report by the Performance Co-ordinator and the Business Performance and Insights Team Leader (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book) the Corporate Performance Quarter 3 2024/25 Report was presented to the Panel.

In response to a question from Councillor Jennings, the Panel heard that detail would be sought and brought back to the Panel on the numbers of DFG applications made and the number granted, along with confirming the internal escalation process for this. The Executive Councillor shared the Panel's frustrations at the processes involved and reassured that conversations were ongoing with Places for People to ensure maximum efficiencies and positives outcomes be achieved for residents.

It was confirmed to the Panel, following questions from Councillor Pitt and Councillor Chapman that the upgrades to pathways in St Neots had been carried out in Regatta Meadows and not Riverside Park as stated within the report. The Panel were further assured that further funding streams were being investigated in order to progress the upgrades for the Riverside Park.

The Panel heard, in response to a question from Councillor Corney, that the Enforcement and Operations Teams were extremely efficient at dealing with fly tips reported to the Council and were assured that prosecutions were made where possible. It was noted that this was a new measure within the report but that the increase in reported incidents within December were unlikely to be linked to the introduction of subscriptions for green bins due to the seasonality of that service.

Following an observation from Councillor Chapman that bin collections had been severely impacted within St Neots due to road closures by the County Council, and querying whether this was the reason which PI21 was at red status, the Panel heard that detail would be sought and brought back to the Panel. In response to a further question on missed bins from Councillor Jennings, the Panel

heard that the figures for missed bins were achieved through a combination of in-cab data and resident reports, and that full detail on the metrics behind PI21 would be provided to the Panel at a later date.

Councillor Pickering expressed concern that the amber status of PI34 was being reported within the Council's performance metrics but that the delays were outside of the Council's control. The Panel heard that this was a CPCA project which would help fulfil an identified needs for further education provision in St Neots and that the project was included within the report as it aligned with the Council's Corporate Plan values.

The Panel heard that an update on the progress of the Electrical Vehicle charging report would be provided following an enquiry by Councillor Pitt.

In response to a question from Councillor Pickering, the Panel heard that the workshops and meetings reference in Outcome 5 of the report, were local and national events, including UK REEF, attended by Officers and Executive Councillors to promote Huntingdonshire as a destination for business investment. The Panel further heard that the Economic Development team monitored the response from these events and measured the resulting success. It was noted, following a question from Councillor Terry, relating to progress on parking enforcement, that the Council had been in touch with the districts 3 MPs and that they were supportive to the Council and sympathetic to the current nationwide delays to the project.

Following the discussion, it was

RESOLVED

that Cabinet be encouraged to consider the comments from Overview and Scrutiny when making a decision upon the recommendations within the report.

64. MARKET TOWNS PROGRAMME - SPRING UPDATE

By means of a report by the Head of Economy, Regeneration and Housing Delivery (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book) the Market Towns Programme – Spring Update was presented to the Panel.

Councillor Pickering expressed concern that the Priory Centre had been closed for six months to date and that the project was yet to get underway. The Panel were assured that the project was progressing and that the closure of the building had allowed for more intensive pre project work and surveys to be undertaken, it was further noted that the building work project would take a year to complete once underway.

It was noted, following a question from Councillor Pickering, that project progress would first be shared with St Neots Town Council and local ward members as local stakeholders prior to being shared via the democratic meeting cycle.

The Panel heard, following comments from Councillor Chapman, that the installation of an electrical box on the St Neots Market Square had been necessary to update the electrics for the Square and to maximise its potential within the development, it was noted that the box would be landscaped in order to blend with the street scene as the project neared completion. It was also noted that the scheme did not involve excessive bollards to prevent car parking in order to maintain accessibility and maximise opportunities within the development. Illegal car parking in the square was not anticipated to be an issue due to the anticipated implementation of parking enforcement. It was observed that both of these designs were included within the plans for the development.

In response to a question from Councillor Corney, the Panel heard that Cambridgeshire County Council would be consulted as part of the planning process for the Ramsey project and that this approach had provided a collaborative result in previous projects.

In response to a question from Councillor Pitt, the Panel heard that discussions were ongoing with Ramsey Town Council over the management of the shop in a box units. The Panel also heard, following questions from Councillor Gleadow and Councillor Pitt that an exit strategy was built into the digital screen project from the beginning and that funding for this was built into the project, there would also be opportunities to transfer the maintenance and ownership of the screens to town Councils should they wish to and that relevant costs would be provided should they be interested further down the line. Full details on the cost of the current maintenance and operation of the screens would be relayed to the Panel in due course.

The Panel heard, following questions from Councillor Pitt, that a communication plan was in place for the Old Falcon project but that it would be flexible to react to the project as it got underway, the Panel was assured that key elements had been, and would continue to be shared with ward members. It was also noted that briefings with ward members could be reinstated if needed.

It was observed by Councillor Pitt and Councillor Chapman that funding for the Priory Centre project had only recently been approved by St Neots Town Council and that they were concerned that the success of the scheme was reliant on this contribution, the Panel heard that the project could have been adjusted to ensure it fell within budget.

The Panel were assured, following a question from Councillor Pickering, that money for the Shopfront Grants scheme would only be paid upon the completion of a project.

Following the discussion, it was

RESOLVED

that Cabinet be encouraged to consider the comments from Overview and Scrutiny when making a decision upon the recommendations within the report.

65. 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).

66. MARKET TOWNS UPDATE REPORT

The Panel were reminded of the Part Two nature of the item and that the contents of the report and subsequent discussion should remain confidential.

The Panel gave consideration to an exempt report by the Head of Economy, Regeneration and Housing Delivery, (a copy of which was appended in the annex to the Minute Book), on the Market Towns Update Report which was presented to 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 within the report.

Chair

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