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## Overview and Scrutiny (Service Delivery and Resources)

Report of the meetings held on 5th April and  
7th June 2005

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### Matters for Information

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#### 1. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S INTERIM PLAN

The Panel has endorsed for submission to the Cabinet the Children and Young People's Interim Plan for 2005/06. In so doing Members have been acquainted with the arrangements that have been put in place to meet new statutory requirements relating to services for children and young people.

Members have discussed the division of services by age and the practical implications of the Interim Plan, following which Members have expressed the view that the Council should be formally represented at senior level on a proposed Huntingdonshire Area Group. Members also have requested that, once formulated, detailed plans and key service delivery points are submitted to a future meeting for consideration.

#### 2. LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICE AGREEMENT

The Panel has received details of the second Local Public Service Agreement in Cambridgeshire, including background information to the Agreement, an outline of the role of the District Council, the allocation of funding involved and the priorities contained in the Agreement.

The Panel has been assured that the Agreement does not commit the Council to any funding for services in excess of that already included in the Medium Term Plan.

The Panel has discussed affordable housing; older people and home improvement grant aid and has requested that monitoring data collected by the County Council under the Agreement is submitted to the Panel on a quarterly basis as part of their regular performance monitoring report.

**3. MAKING THE RIGHT CONNECTIONS:  
REVIEW OF COMMUNICATIONS AND  
CONSULTATION STRATEGY**

The Panel has endorsed a revised Communications and Consultation Strategy for the Council. In considering the changes, Members' attention has been drawn to the criteria against which the Strategy will be assessed and the action plan.

The Panel has received confirmation that the Audit Commission is satisfied that all relevant matters raised during the Comprehensive Performance Assessment have been addressed in the Strategy, that it will be reviewed again in three years and that the Panel will be provided with details of the Council's performance against the Strategy.

At the suggestion of the Vice-Chairman, references will be included in the Strategy to the Council's communication with the Local Government Association and to the provision of seminars for Members on technical matters.

**4. HEADQUARTERS AND OTHER ACCOMMODATION**

The Panel has received details of the decisions by the Cabinet following consideration of the feasibility study by Lambert Smith Hampton into options for the Council's future headquarters and depot accommodation, the comments of the District Council Headquarters and Other Office Accommodation Members Advisory Group and of the joint meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

**5. HEAR BY RIGHT**

Further to Item No. 41 of the Report to the meeting of the Council held on 13th April 2005, the Panel has received the revised Action Plan for Working towards Emerging Status in implementing Hear by Right. Hear by Right is a set of standards developed by the National Youth Agency and the Local Government Association to help develop procedures to involve young people in local decision-making. The Action Plan has been amended to include reference to priorities and timescales as requested by the Panel.

The Panel has discussed the Council's duties under the Children's Act and the ways in which they might become involved in implementing the Action Plan. As a result Councillors D A Giles and J S Watt have been nominated to monitor appropriate projects from the Hear by Right Action Plan within the south and north of the District respectively and to report back to the Panel on progress.

**6. GROWING SUCCESS: A CORPORATE PLAN**

In conjunction with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance) the Panel has reviewed Growing Success: A Corporate Plan. Members' attention has been drawn to the framework within which the Plan operates and the priorities that have been developed

in response to a suggestion by the Audit Commission. In discussing the priorities Members have noted the way in which they have been arrived at and the uses to which they will be put.

Having been assured that, given the Council's current position, the Plan is intended to order the Council's priorities and will not be used to reduce services, the Panel has discussed the priorities according to healthy population, specifically the inspection and enforcement at food premises, safe and active communities and market housing. However, the Panel has concluded that baseline data should be established via the Performance Management Framework before the prioritisation can be properly evaluated. The Panel has therefore requested the Cabinet to consider the inclusion of reference to market housing under the priority Housing which meets Local Needs as having High Impact.

The Panel also has considered the Corporate Scorecard. Specific reference has been made to public satisfaction with the level of Council Tax for the services provided by the Council and the measures planned to improve satisfaction in the District. Members also have discussed the targets for accessible services and the general approach to target setting.

With regard to the Council's performance against National Best Value Performance Indicators for 2004/05, a number of queries relating to the Council's performance have been raised and further information has been requested on -

- ◆ the percentage of land and highways assessed as having significant or heavy combined deposits of litter and detritus;
- ◆ the average length of stay in bed & breakfast and hostels;
- ◆ the number of benefit claimants visited per 1,000 cases; and
- ◆ the percentage of recoverable overpayments (excluding Council Tax Benefit) that were recovered in the year.

Finally, the Panel has been acquainted with the work undertaken by the Comprehensive Performance Assessment Working Group on the Improvement Plan, the outcome of which will be reported to the next meeting.

## **7. THE RURAL ECONOMY AND SERVICES**

Further to Item No 1(a) of the Report to the meeting of the Council held on 21st July 2004, it was reported at the meeting in May that the Countryside Agency had declined a request to speak to the Panel on the rural economy and services and, as a result, Members have reviewed the objectives of the study. Various options were considered, following which a report was requested on the District Council's role on promoting and assisting the village economy, practices at other authorities in this area, problems being experienced in rural villages, the findings of the Countryside Agency Study on rural economies in the East of England and village regeneration together with a revised study plan.

At the meeting of the Panel in June Members received a report summarising the findings of the report of the Countryside Agency entitled Rural Economies – Stepping Stones: A Regional Perspective of the East of England and containing a number of suggestions for areas that might be pursued as part of the study on the rural economy and services. Having discussed the role of larger settlements, Members have requested details of the Council's policies and plans relating to the local economy and the provision of Council services to rural areas via towns and larger settlements. On receipt of this information a sub group will be established and tasked with liaising with villages to assess the degree to which these policies and plans are being implemented.

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### **Other Matters of Interest**

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#### **8. ACQUISITION OF LAND AT HOUGHTON ROAD, ST IVES**

The Chairman has reported that, in accordance with the Council's Constitution, he had given consent for the acquisition of land at St Ives for affordable housing to be submitted as an item of urgency to the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 24th February 2005.

#### **9. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 – FORWARD PLAN**

The Panel has been acquainted with details of the Forward Plan and forthcoming Key Decisions which has been prepared by the Leader of the Council.

#### **10. PROGRESS**

The Panel has been apprised of the progress of actions required as a result of its previous decisions and has received updates on the Council's policy on smoking in leisure centres, the work of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment Working Group and the study on older persons public health needs. With regard to the latter Councillor K J Churchill has been appointed to the Working Group tasked with undertaking this study in replacement of Councillor A Hansard.

#### **11. SCRUTINY**

The Panel has considered the latest editions of the Decision Digest. A number of queries raised with regard to items appearing in the Digest have been answered to Members' satisfaction.

K Reynolds  
Chairman