

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, 3 September 2025.

PRESENT: Councillor C M Gleadow – Chair.

Councillors A Blackwell, J R Catmur,
B S Chapman, I D Gardener, A R Jennings,
R Martin, S R McAdam, Dr M Pickering,
S L Taylor and C H Tevlin.

APOLOGY(ES): Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors S J Corney.

25. MINUTES

The Attendees from the meeting held 8th July 2025 have been amended to reflect the presence of Councillors J Catmur virtually.

The final paragraph of minute 25/22 was amended to read:

Councillor Taylor expressed her concerns over the report, highlighting that the company were met at the UKREiiF but the Council has not sought anyone else. She acknowledged their impressive track record but wonders why the funds from the reserves of £1 million is being given to a private company when this could be spent on the Council's own assets, referencing St Neots Riverside paths as an example.

After which the minutes of the meeting held 8th July 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

26. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

27. 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 noted with disappointment that the Parking strategy was not due to come to the Panel until Spring 2026 even though this has already been discussed at Cabinet and other forums. The Panel heard that this is underway and if it can be brought forward, it will come to the Panel sooner than currently estimated.

Further clarification regarding engagement with Parishes, in particular, the Local Plan, was sought by the Panel. It was confirmed that this will get picked up with future written correspondence outside of the meeting.

28. OUTSTANDING RESPONSES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The Panel received and noted the responses received in relation to questions arising at previous meetings of the Panel.

29. CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE UPDATE 2025/26 Q1

By means of a report by the Head of Policy, Performance & Emergency Planning (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), The Corporate Peer Challenge Update 2025/26 Q1 Report was presented to the Panel.

Attention was drawn to page 58 of the report, commenting on the scrutiny process and asked for clarification on how the training has impacted how the items are coming to the Panel for discussion, referencing the higher volume at some meetings which can make it difficult to scrutinise effectively. The Panel heard that training was provided to Panel Members so they could own the scrutiny process such as bringing forward items they wish to be discussed. Open dialogue for further discussions was encouraged regarding the size of the Officer's reports and what information is necessary for scrutiny.

Appreciation was shown for the report, but a question was raised regarding this being continuous work based on the actions presented. It was suggested that further information about the continued improvement within these areas would be helpful. Recommendation one in the report was also questioned, how the Joint Administration are prioritising their finances and funding to the priorities of the Council. It was confirmed to the Panel that the financial information requested is available but they would need to take this away and come back with a full answer for the Panel.

A question was raised relating to recommendation seven relating to future agendas being issued ahead of time, in that there was no additional time provided with the issuing of the current agenda. It was noted that there was still a large volume of reading required in a short space of time. The Chair agreed, advising she would look into seeing if a forward agenda could be shared with the Panel moving forward.

Concerns were raised relating to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and its absence from this report. The Panel heard that when the Peer Challenge was brought in, the Council were unaware of LGR so it could not be included as it is a reflection of the process at the time. It was advised that all of the work being undertaken around the Peer Challenge will be beneficial to the new unitary authority after reorganisation and that there will be a transition period which will help integrate systems and processes.

A question relating to the Communication Engagement strategy was raised regarding the short statements which were to accompany the Corporate narratives, which was to be used to communicate with staff and Members. Officers were asked where can the Members see

examples of this in use. The Panel heard that this will be coming through imminently after a conversation with the Communications team earlier that day, confirming there is a campaign coming which will highlight the things the Council has done and that Members will be briefed further on this.

After concerns were raised involving actions which were due to be completed imminently, the Panel were assured that updates regarding this would be provided in the next quarterly update.

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.

30. COMMERCIAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

By means of a report by the Corporate Director for Place (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), The Commercial Investment Strategy Report was presented to the Panel.

Agreement with the principle that all decisions taken under the Strategy should lead to revenue generation was expressed; however, concerns were raised about the approach to risk. The view being that all investments should comply with the Council's agreed level of risk. It was also suggested that an appropriate forum should be identified for reporting on the activities of the governance arrangements. However, it is recognised that monitoring extends wider than the Strategy and is constrained by the terms of the Constitution. The Panel heard that the risk level should be taken into account in any business cases that are brought forward but a previous discussion was referenced in which the Council were willing to accept a higher degree of risk relative to the returns that would be generated and these are balanced against economical and social value in the local area. The Officer agreed that a review of the strategy would be sensible and that building in a timescale could be a good idea for this.

The Chair has commented that the yield appears to be optimistic and that there is significant reliance on the S151 Officer.

It was challenged whether the Council should be making investments given that Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) will be implemented in a short period of time. It was suggested the Council should have an exit strategy that includes disposing of assets and any money devoted to Huntingdonshire. The Council's approach to holding Community Infrastructure Levy funding was also questioned. It was pointed out to the Panel that there will not necessarily be further investments, but the Strategy has been updated in case it is needed. The business case for any investments will include consideration of the implications of LGR. The Officers advised they share the Member's concern in this matter and want to do their best for the communities they represent and this comes into the decisions that are being made. It was reiterated that the Council wish to ensure the new Organisation are financially viable as the alternative would

fail residents of Huntingdonshire.

Concern was expressed that the Strategy will not achieve the objective of generating revenue as effectively as the previous iteration. Assurance was sought that the Strategy will not be used for Invest-to-save purposes as this does not accord with the Strategy's revenue generating objective. The Panel heard that the prime goal of the strategy is income generation and that there are benefits to having a spread portfolio rather than all investments being tied solely into the Local area. It was advised that investing outside of the area still means returns will be spent on the local area and services.

It was suggested that the contents of the Strategy should be made clearer and given greater emphasis. Another issue identified was the delegated authority and the process of delegation. The Panel heard that it was reflecting the existing constitution.

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.

31. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2025/26 (QUARTER 1)

By means of a report by the Business Intelligence and Performance Manager (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the Corporate Performance 2025/26 Quarter 1 Report was presented to the Panel.

The predicted status of PI10 was questioned. It is currently Red and predicted to be Red, but the text states that it is not clear how this will be achieved. It is understood this can be attributed to the Valuation Office backlog, which it is expected will be resolved. Following a further question on this PI about whether the Council is able to collect Council Tax if properties do not have a banding valuation and what the implications might be, Members have been advised that affected properties are given an estimated banding so payments can be made.

The improved performance on missed bins was also welcomed by the Panel.

Satisfaction for the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) was expressed but a question was raised whether there are enough enforcement resources as instances of illegal parking are still being witnessed. Enforcement only recently commenced, and this will form part of the scheduled ongoing monitoring process.

Street Cleansing were praised for exceeding their targets every month of the quarter. After questions by the Members about street cleansing performance, the Panel has discussed the methodology through which standards are assessed. It has been agreed that this together with information on context is required better to understand the figures. This information will be provided with the next Quarter report. Details of how parking "hotspots" can be reported also will be

provided.

A question regarding graffiti was raised in which the Panel wanted to understand if all graffiti is removed by the Council or just obscene graffiti. The Panel were advised this question would be taken away and a response sought.

Following an enquiry, it has been agreed that PI19 will be split between blue and green bin recycling.

After a comment by the Panel, future reports will make clear whether the direction of travel shown in each illustration is positive or negative for clarity.

It has been noted that food collection will be included in the report from the first Quarter next year.

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.

32. LOCAL GOVERNMENT OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK INITIAL CONSULTATION RESPONSE

By means of a report by Head of Policy, Performance & Emergency Planning (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), The Local Government Outcomes Framework Initial Consultation Response was presented to the Panel.

It was suggested that leading indicators could have been utilised in the response in the report to highlight how well the Council is doing.

It was also commented that the data included in the report could have been streamlined to make the report easier to read. The Panel heard that effort was taken to make the report easy to read with fewer data overlaps and omissions. The Panel were advised this will be brought back to the Committee with more information with an estimate date given as December.

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.

33. PLANNING ENFORCEMENT

The Panel were advised by the Corporate Director of Place that this item had been retracted from the agenda due to some challenges in the service area. The Members were encouraged to share any specific challenges they have offline.

Following this, it was

RESOLVED

that there would be no discussion regarding this item.

Chair