

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, 22 January 2026.

PRESENT: Councillor N J Hunt – Chair.

Councillors T Alban, S Bywater, S J Criswell,
M A Hassall, M Kadewere, S Mokbul,
B M Pitt, D J Shaw and N Wells.

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor L Davenport-Ray.

34. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 6th November 2025 were approved as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

35. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

36. 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 Notice of Key Decisions for the period 1st February 2026 to 31st May 2026 were presented to the Panel.

37. USE OF URGENCY PROVISION

By means of a report by the Elections and Democratic Services Manager (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the Use of Urgency Provision Report was presented to the Panel.

The Panel

RESOLVED

to note the contents of the report.

38. FLEET RENEWAL AND INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY

By means of a report by the Head of Operational Services (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the Fleet Renewal and Infrastructure Improvement Strategy was presented to the Panel.

It was clarified to the Panel that the electric freighters were heavier

than the vehicles currently used. Concern was expressed about the carbon footprint generated during the production of the vehicles, following which, the Panel heard that this concern was recognised and in addition, noted that Germany had introduced some flexibility into their proposal to ban internal combustion engines by 2035. It was further noted that with flexibility in the strategy the main focus would be to secure power onto the site as this would form the basic structure going forward.

The Panel heard that the business continuity plans would be updated as technology was updated and in line with the required power provision at Eastfield House. It was also noted that the flexibility of the report and strategy allowed for further development of emerging technologies and the associated operational delivery and for the Council to react accordingly.

Councillor Shaw reflected that the report had previously been seen and discussed by the Climate Working Group and that he was generally in favour of the Strategy however he did express concerns relating to the optimism surrounding the responsible disposal of lithium batteries.

The Panel heard that modelling on typical mileage per kilowatt hour of the vehicles had been undertaken through the Energy Saving Trust and using existing round data whilst also accommodating the anticipated expansion to rounds encompassing new homes under construction. It was confirmed that an anticipated maximum of 850kVs would be required to charged all vehicles from flat to a full charge and that further work had been done to calculate smart charging to bring vehicles of different charge levels to a balanced charge then complete all vehicles to full charge.

It was noted that the grounds team at St Neots Town Council had acquired an electric lawn mower and that the reduction in noise and fumes experienced by operatives had been well received. This was a sentiment shared by the Council's Operations Team who have been trialling new technologies in order to make informed judgement on their use. It was also noted that smaller, urban authorities were able to make good use of these technologies however significant challenges were posed by the size and rural nature of the district. It was further observed that electrical vehicles tended to have cheaper maintenance costs due to less moving parts however investment would be required to enable the workshop to accommodate parts and training of operatives to service the new technologies.

The Panel were advised that the DVSA would accommodate and account for the weight of the battery on each vehicle in such a way so as not to loose the capacity of the vehicle and that it's payload would not be reduced. It was also advised that the team had previously loaned a vehicle from a neighbouring authority which had performed well but more information was being sought on performance in extreme temperatures and weathers and that a cautious approach was being taken.

It was observed that a cautious approach would be prudent as there were concerns about the infrastructure required for the new technology to function and it was acknowledged that this was

imperative. It was also advised that research was being undertaken on optimum battery conditions and charging to ensure full life expectancy from the technology.

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.

39. UPDATE ON THE COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WEALTH BUILDING STRATEGY AND ASSOCIATED FUND

By means of a report and presentation by the Public Protection Manager (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), an Update on the Community Health and Wealth Building Strategy and Associated Fund was presented to the Panel.

In reflection on lessons learned from the application process, the Panel heard that the team had worked to support applicants who were not ready to begin the application process at that point but would proceed when ready as well as ensuring that applicants were not put off with a lengthy application process.

The Panel heard that each project had their own social value measures and that quarterly reports would be produced and reported on. The Panel were assured that risk management was in place and that this would also be accommodated in future Annual Audit Plans.

It was confirmed to the Panel that staff costs for projects were an eligible expenditure and that workshops had been held to understand the problems experienced when securing funding. The team further advised that a library of resources had been created along with standard information to assist further projects in their development. It was noted that this was an evolving model and would develop organically as required.

The Panel heard that following the first round of funding, the team had discovered that ambition was good, by keeping tight timescales the process kept moving with positive responses. The team reflected that applications had come in from similar areas and that going forward it was noted that a communications plan and resource were in place and that support from Members would be appreciated to help spread across the district.

It was further observed that Covid had proved the resilience of communities across the district and that the data available through the projects allowed for further learnings and understandings on this.

The Panel heard that a further role out of the project was planned with a launch event planned in late January 2026 with many local businesses and organisations expected to attend. It was also noted that part of the strategy was to further collaborate with partner organisations including North West Anglian NHS Foundation Trust and Cambridgeshire Constabulary to adopt and improve the funding

model and ways of working.

The Panel praised an excellent report and presentation and were pleased to learn that the Council were early adopters and influencers in this field.

Chair