
Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery and Resources)

Report of the meetings held on 4th October and
1st November 2005

Matters for Information

21. RECYCLING CREDITS

The Panel has reviewed proposals by the County Council to change the recycling credit scheme prior to its submission to the Cabinet. The proposals have been prompted by the Government's plans to impose a national scheme for recycling credits should no local arrangements be in place.

The Panel has discussed the gate fee paid by the County Council to landfill site operators to accept waste, the landfill tax credit paid to the District Council and the landfill tax escalator mechanism. Members have been informed that an objective of the local scheme is to harmonise the landfill tax credits paid to all District Councils in Cambridgeshire.

The Panel also has discussed the financial implications for the District Council of the Waste Private Finance Initiative, the proposed agreement and the activities undertaken countywide to promote recycling. Finally, Members have been acquainted with the further work that would be required on its effect and impact on local community organisations that collect glass at present, if glass is to be included in the Council's recycling scheme.

22. STUDY: THE RURAL ECONOMY AND SERVICES – HEALTH SERVICES

Pursuant to Item No.18 of the Report to the meeting of the Council held on 28th September 2005, the Panel has been presented with information on the health service provision in the District by locality. Given the loss of a NHS dental surgery in Somersham and the large areas that exist without provision, together with the lack of public transport, the Panel has agreed to study all health services but pay particular attention to the distribution of dental services in the District.

The Panel has requested various additional information and will invite a representative of the Primary Care Trust to a future meeting to discuss the provision of NHS dental services. A public consultation exercise also will be carried out and all Members will be surveyed for

their views on the availability of health services in their respective wards in the District and on the public transport available to reach these services.

23. HUNTINGDONSHIRE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

The Panel has invited Dr C Macleod, Huntingdonshire Director of Public Health, to its meeting in November 2005 to discuss the measures being taken to combat pandemic flu should it arise.

Dr Macleod has stressed that currently there is no pandemic flu in the world and she outlined the chances of pandemic flu occurring. An outbreak is likely within the next 11 years and it is suggested that 25% of employees of organisations could be effected.

With regard to recent media coverage concerning the possibility of avian flu becoming pandemic, Dr Macleod has informed Members that this would require the current strain to mutate into a form that could be passed between humans. At present only those who come into direct contact with infected birds are in danger of contracting avian flu. Dr Macleod has also stated that older people, carers and those with chronic medical conditions are at greater risk from seasonal flu, which could result from the predicted cold weather.

Dr Macleod concluded by discussing the duty placed on public bodies, including the District Council to produce a Pandemic Flu Plan for submission to the Department of Health by December 2005. She has also outlined the medical prevention and treatment being stock piled and the assistance that would be required of the District Council to staff vaccination centres.

The Panel has discussed the development and administration of vaccines, the potential of pigeons to carry avian flu and the adverse effect on agricultural businesses of negative press interest in pandemic flu.

24. FIXED PENALTY NOTICES

The Panel has reviewed a report on Fixed Penalty Notices prior to its submission to the Cabinet. Members have been acquainted with the legislative background, the powers available to the Council, the resource implications of adopting an enhanced enforcement role and the possibility of involving Town and Parish Councils in enforcement.

The Panel has discussed the cost of enforcement, the approach to be taken for repeat offenders and the Council's ability to take action against those who discard rubbish from cars. Having commented on enforcement of dog fouling and the resources currently used to administer this role, Members have concluded that the possibility of using Council's existing resources to undertake additional enforcement should be explored.

25. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Panel has reviewed the Council's performance against the Corporate Plan. Members have commented on the absence of data against some measures and requested clarification of the policy on how targets and intervention levels can be changed within services. Having been reminded of the role of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment Plan Working Group in monitoring the Council's performance, further information has been requested on the Employee Opinion Survey and the steps being undertaken to address the low results which resulted.

Other Matters of Interest

26. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE DELIVERY AND RESOURCES) - PROGRESS

The Panel has reviewed the progress of its studies. Following receipt of an expression of interest, the Panel has agreed to appoint Councillor M G Baker to the Sub-Group undertaking the study on Twinning and the Chairman of the Panel has replaced Councillor I P Taylor on the Comprehensive Performance Assessment Improvement Plan Working Group.

The Panel has added cleaning regimes in town centres to the programme of studies and agreed a course of action to deal with a suggested study on the involvement of Members in the determination of planning applications.

27. FORWARD PLAN

The Panel has been acquainted with details of the Forward Plan of key decisions, which has been prepared by the Leader. Further information has been requested on items on the Mobile Home Park at St Neots, Fixed Penalty Notices, the New Highways Agency Agreement, Concessionary Fares, the Local Area Agreement and the Members Advisory Group for Public Conveniences.

28. 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 their satisfaction.

K Reynolds
Chairman