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## Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery and Resources)

Report of the meetings held on 6th December 2005,  
3rd January and 7th February 2006

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### Matters for Information

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#### **29. CONCESSIONARY FARES**

The Panel has reviewed a report on changes to the concessionary fares regime following its submission to the Cabinet. The Cabinet previously had considered the content of the report to enable the Council to notify bus operators of its decision by 1st December 2005.

The Panel has been informed that the Government has announced that those who are eligible for bus passes will be entitled to free travel outside the morning peak within the District's boundaries. However, the new scheme means that some residents will be worse off than at present.

The Panel has discussed the financial implications of the new scheme and has been informed that consultants are to be employed by the Cambridgeshire authorities to advise on the various options the Council has available and their associated costs.

The Government has promised additional funding for the scheme but details are not yet known. Other shortcomings of the new scheme in rural areas include the fact that buses only run at peak times and difficulties associated with pricing tickets for services operating at District level.

#### **30. CALL CENTRE PERFORMANCE AND PROPOSED CHANGES TO CALL HANDLING ARRANGEMENTS**

The Panel has reviewed the performance of the Call Centre during its first month of operation. Having noted the rates at which calls have been received, answered and resolved satisfactorily, Members have been acquainted with proposals to improve the current call handling arrangements by increasing the number of operational lines available. Members also have been advised of the introduction of the recording of calls and of an announcement to provide details of queue position together with the ability to leave a message. The cost of the additional lines is included in the Centre's set up costs.

The Panel discussed the background music played when calls are transferred to the back office. The music cannot be removed without the agreement of the other Councils using the system. As a result, this matter will be raised at the next meeting of the Customer Service Partnership Board. Members also discussed the operation of the call back system during busy periods, caller line identification and the policy on providing transcripts of recorded calls. All the proposed changes to the system have been endorsed by the Panel and a further report has been requested on the transfer of calls to the County Council which, at present, is not possible.

**31. RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SITE, MOORHOUSE DRIVE, HUNTINGDON**

The Panel has considered proposals for the disposal of Council owned land at Moorhouse Drive, Huntingdon. Having endorsed the principle of the sale, Members have discussed the type of housing to be provided on the site and have formed the view that, as a housing authority, the Council should seek to ensure that a greater proportion of land is allocated to affordable housing than the levels specified in the outline planning permission relating to the site. As a result, the Panel has suggested that a condition should be attached to the sale requiring 40% of the land to be allocated to affordable housing. However, Members have stressed that this should not jeopardise the sale of the land.

The Panel subsequently has discussed the introduction by the Council of a policy and guidance for future sales of Council owned land. For this purpose, further information has been requested on the Council's existing land holdings and on the likely financial implications of introducing the policy under consideration.

**32. PUBLIC CONVENIENCES**

The Panel has considered a report of the meeting of the Members Advisory Group for Public Conveniences held on the 24th November 2005 and a report on the improvement proposals arising from that meeting. Having been acquainted with the background to the reports, Members have discussed the proposals in detail, which include a programme of improvements, the introduction of a single contract for the cleaning and maintenance of all public conveniences in the District and the termination of leases for the remaining automatic public conveniences.

The Panel has discussed the Council's policy on the provision of public conveniences in larger villages. Members have concerns over the loss of facilities in such areas. During further discussion, it has been established that the proposed introduction of charging for the use of improved public conveniences is intended to deter vandalism. Members also have discussed the design of public conveniences, sharing the toilet facilities of traders, the cost of the proposed improvements and possible locations for public conveniences in St Neots. With regard to the latter, Members have been encouraged to make their views on location known to the Executive Councillor

before a final decision is taken. Having received assurances on the contractual arrangements covering maintenance and cleaning, the Panel has endorsed the reports for submission to the Cabinet.

### **33. ST NEOTS MOBILE HOME PARK**

The Panel has been acquainted with recent developments at the St Neots Mobile Home Park. Having received an outline of the park's history, Members have been informed that the site had been surveyed in June 2005 under the Council's Contaminated Land Strategy, which revealed elevated levels of carbon dioxide, which now has been addressed and benzo(a)pyrene. The findings had been the subject of a meeting for residents of the park and subsequently they all have been advised of the findings in writing and provided with advice and details of a dedicated contact officer of the Council. The Environmental Health Division is legally nominated as a regulator in such cases and its decision on the extent of the contamination was expected the following day. Residents would be informed of the decision forthwith. Their next stage is to appoint a consultant to propose a remediation strategy and on receipt of this advice a contractor will be appointed to carry out the remediation work. Some of the works will be eligible for government grant.

The Panel has been assured that the Council will meet the cost of accommodating residents who are displaced during the remediation works and of making good areas where works have been carried out. Members also have been acquainted with the potential affects of benzo(a)pyrene and with health and safety advice provided to residents.

### **34. CAMBRIDGESHIRE PARLIAMENT**

The Panel has received a presentation on the Cambridgeshire Parliament. An elected Member and officer attended the February meeting to outline the history, purpose and work of the Parliament on behalf of those with learning disabilities. The Parliament undertakes advocacy work by testing public services and holding bimonthly meetings with senior representatives of public, private and voluntary service providers with a view to improving access for those with learning disabilities. The areas addressed by the Parliament include transport, health, housing, high support needs and sports and leisure.

Having established their own Cabinet, the Panel also has received details of how the Parliament engages with local authorities. It helps raise awareness amongst those with learning disabilities of the electoral process and, in Huntingdonshire, currently is helping to make the Council's literature more accessible.

Members have discussed empowerment for those with learning disabilities and funding of the Parliament. A request has been made for the Parliament to look at improvements needed for disabled access at St Neots Railway Station.

**35. PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

The Panel has reviewed the Council's performance against the Corporate Plan and Members' attention was drawn to those elements of the scorecard where targets were not being achieved in the year to date. The performance data previously had been reviewed by the Working Group established for this purpose, who are confident that the Council will achieve the majority of its targets by the end of the year. However, more needs to be done to inform the public of the cost to them of the services they receive from the Council and the good value for money this represents. The Working Group has identified the need to ensure all data is provided by officers to enable an accurate picture to be presented to Members, but they have recognised that the number of measures in the performance management system needs to be reduced and the outcomes prioritised. The views of the Working Group have been endorsed by the Panel.

**36. PRIMARY CARE TRUST –  
CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS FOR THE FUTURE**

The Panel has considered proposals for the reconfiguration of Primary Care Trusts in Cambridgeshire. The Older Persons Working Group previously had looked at the proposals in detail and as a result had submitted a detailed report to the Panel, which contained a series of recommendations on the Council's response to the Strategic Health Authority. These recommendations have been endorsed prior to consideration by the Cabinet.

**37. OLDER PERSONS WORKING GROUP**

The Panel has received an interim report by the Older Persons Working Group on the progress of the study on services for older people.

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**Other Matters of Interest**

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

The Panel has reviewed the progress of its studies. The study on the rural economy and services will be pursued at the March meeting when the Primary Care Trust's Director responsible for dental services will be in attendance to discuss the distribution of dental provision in the District and a scoping report for the study on town centre cleaning regimes will be considered in April 2006.

The Panel has asked the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance) to undertake a study on the Council's procurement policies and practices, in particular the degree to which the Council procures goods and services from local businesses.

**39. FORWARD PLAN**

The Panel has been acquainted with details of the Forward Plan of key decisions, which has been prepared by the Leader. Having requested further information on specific items, the Panel also has reiterated its concerns at its inability to comment on new items that have been included in the Plan since the last meeting for determination before the next meeting. Subsequently Members have been informed of the action taken by the Leader to minimise the number of items appearing on the Plan at short notice.

**40. CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The Panel has received the Minutes of meetings of the Cambridgeshire County Council Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee at each of its meetings.

**41. 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