
Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support)

Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel
(Planning and Finance) held on 11th April and
Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) held on
13th June 2006

Matters for Information

1. **IMPLEMENTING ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT (IEG) STATEMENT**

The Panel has considered the content of the 2006 Implementing Electronic Governance (IEG) Statement which sets out the Council's progress against e-government targets in the current year and had been submitted in draft to the Secretary of State pending its approval by the Council. Arising from their request at a previous meeting, the Panel has also been acquainted with details as to how money received from previous IEG grants has been allocated and expended.

In considering the draft statement, the Panel noted the significant investment that has been made in recent years by the Council in e-government and reiterated its concern over the absence of a broadband connection for all Members to facilitate electronic communication with the Council. Members also commented on the absence of information within the statement in respect of the identification of efficiency gains from the e-government programme and the Panel has requested further information on the implications for the District Council of the Government's Direct.Gov initiative.

The Panel wish to draw the Council's attention to the cost of e-government implementation and suggest that, in terms of value for money, this is unlikely to be offset by efficiency savings of that magnitude. Accordingly the Panel has agreed to convey their comments to the Council for consideration in approving the IEG statement. Item No.4 of the Council agenda refers.

2. **REVIEW OF MEMBERS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PROCESS**

The Panel has considered the outcome of their consultation with other Members of the Council as part of their review of procedural arrangements for the determination of development control applications. In consequence, the Panel has decided to widen the remit of the review to include other aspects of the determination

process and appointed a working group for this purpose, with Councillor J A Gray as rapporteur.

A brief update on the progress of the working group was given at the Panel's June meeting and it is anticipated that a report on the outcome of the study will be available in the early Autumn.

3. FINANCIAL STRATEGY, MEDIUM TERM PLAN 2007 TO 2011 AND BUDGET 2006 /07

The Leader of the Council and Executive Councillor for Finance have attended a meeting of the Panel to explain the Cabinet's decision to reject the Panel's request for additional consultation on future reductions in Council expenditure.

The Panel has been advised that in reaching their decision, the Cabinet was of the opinion that there were sufficient opportunities already for Members of the scrutiny panels to consider and review the Council's Budget and Medium Term Plan and that the Cabinet had been mindful of the need to identify and implement efficiency savings as and when opportunities arose. The Panel has been assured by the Leader of the Council that work is ongoing to identify savings to achieve the Council's target for expenditure reductions in the current year.

The Panel has also been assured that there will be ample opportunity for Members of the Corporate and Strategic Framework Panel to consider modifications to the Medium Term Plan, together with the outcome of the current budgetary review at their forthcoming meetings. In the meantime, Members have been encouraged to submit any proposals for possible savings in revenue expenditure or in the Medium Term Plan which would be considered by the Council.

4. A14 ELLINGTON TO FEN DITTON IMPROVEMENT – HUNTINGDON VIADUCT TECHNICAL STUDY

The Panel has been acquainted with the outcome of a jointly commissioned technical study on the implications of the retention or removal of the Huntingdon A14 viaduct. The contents had been endorsed by the Cabinet at their meeting on 8th June 2006 for submission to the Secretary of State for his consideration on the options for the development of the A14 improvement scheme.

Having raised a number of specific issues arising from the report and been informed that the study will now form part of the review of the Huntingdon Vision which is expected to be approved for public consultation shortly, the Panel has agreed to note the study and the Cabinet's decision.

5. POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICERS

The Panel has been acquainted with the deliberations of its Police Community Support Officers Working Group, which has considered

the District Council's financial contribution to the employment of PCSOs in Huntingdonshire.

Having regard to the availability of substantial additional funding from the Neighbourhood Policing Fund, the Panel has recommended the Cabinet to withdraw the Council's funding for the employment of PCSOs at the earliest opportunity, on the understanding that this will not reduce the number of officers deployed within Huntingdonshire.

To enable all Members to be aware of the situation locally the Panel has also recommended that the Community Safety Partnership's quarterly crime report for Huntingdonshire be made available in future to Members of the Council. The Panel's recommendations will be considered in due course by the Cabinet.

Having regard to the nature of their recommendations to Cabinet, the Panel has decided to disband their PCSO working group.

**6. "GROWING SUCCESS" –
CORPORATE PLAN AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

The Panel has been acquainted with a suggested process and timetable for reviewing and updating the Council's Corporate Plan – "Growing Success" over the summer period. Having regard to the role of Overview & Scrutiny in this process a cross Panel working group has been established to lead on the review of the Council's objectives, and the Panel has nominated the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Councillor D B Dew for this purpose.

The Panel has also noted the results of the Council's 2005/06 performance data against the national Best Value Performance Indicators and a number of local measures and performance indicators.

**7. MONITORING SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS:
PLANNING OBLIGATIONS**

The Panel has considered the quarterly monitoring report listing the receipt and expenditure of money negotiated under Section 106 Agreements. In so doing, the Panel has reiterated the need for payments to be received and expended in a timely fashion and has requested that information be incorporated within the next update to illustrate those areas where expenditure had occurred over the quarter.

8. WORKPLAN STUDIES

The Panel has reviewed its Workplan of studies, with arrangements having been made to convene an informal meeting in July to discuss the programme for the forthcoming year.

9. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000: FORWARD PLAN

The Panel has been acquainted with details of the Forward Plan of key decisions, which has been prepared by the Leader of the Council. In so doing the Panel has identified a number of forthcoming Cabinet items upon which they intend to seek further information or include on agenda for future meetings.

**10. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE SUPPORT):
PROGRESS**

The Panel has been apprised with the progress on actions required as a result of its previous decisions. In so doing, the Panel has asked the Head of Administration to ascertain whether their request to the County Council for a review of their speed management policy is being progressed.

J A Gray
Chairman