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## **Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework)**

**Report of the meetings held on 2nd October and  
13th November 2007**

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### **Matters for Information**

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#### **6. A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY FOR HUNTINGDONSHIRE**

The Panel has discussed the draft sustainable community strategy for Huntingdonshire. Members have been reminded of its background and that the strategy will influence the allocation of resources under the Local Public Service Agreement.

In response to written comments submitted by Councillor J A Gray on the lack of reference to rural areas, Members have been informed that Cambridgeshire ACRE have been consulted on the strategy and specific issues to address rural communities will appear in the action plan.

The Panel has discussed each of the strategic themes. With regard to the theme of growth and infrastructure, Members have expressed their concern at the inadequacy of infrastructure to meet demand following housing development in the District. They suggest that appropriate community and leisure facilities for new and existing communities should be a priority and that there is a need for the guided bus to incorporate a park and ride facility in Huntingdon. Members also concluded that the health and well-being theme should include greater reference to older people and to social care facilities.

The Panel has noted that fear of crime will be added to the inclusive, safer and cohesive communities strategic theme and is of the opinion that the Council should support the Police and Partner organisations to achieve additional resources to address anti-social behaviour in the District.

In respect of the children and young people strategic theme, the Panel has emphasised the need for research and evaluation of existing services in this area. Further comment has been made under the economic prosperity theme on the need to achieve a balance between growth, housing and employment. Members have been informed that work is ongoing to promote specific types of employment to reduce out-commuting and that links will be made with the Local Development Framework and Local Development Plan.

The Panel has been informed that air pollution from cars is the main issue for the district under the environment strategic theme and that flooding will be addressed through both prevention and protection measures. Members have endorsed an action plan under the efficient use of resources outcome to plant trees but have stressed that this should not be at the expense of agriculture and that a balance should be maintained.

The Strategic Partnership Thematic Groups will now start to develop action plans for each strategic theme, which will be submitted to the Panel for comment in January 2008.

## **7. DRAFT BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM PLAN**

The Panel has reviewed the draft budget and Medium Term Plan to 2012/13 within the context of a long term financial forecast covering the period up to 2018/19.

Arising from questions about the role of Councillors in scrutinising and determining the budget, the Panel has been assured that Executive Councillors have been involved in compiling the proposals and reminded that the role of scrutiny was to consider the budget as a whole in addition to any new MTP bids.

As further announcements have yet to be made about the level of the revenue support grant allocation for 2008/09, the Panel has agreed that the final budget report should be considered at their meeting in January 2008 when all of the outstanding information should be available.

Councillors have been reminded of the previous capping criteria and acquainted with some early indications as to how this may be applicable to 2008/9, as well as the methodology behind the annual budget requirement increase. In considering the proposed financial strategy, the Panel has expressed its support for any increase in the annual budget requirement to be limited to 4.99% and for the recommendations contained in the report to be submitted to Cabinet and Council.

S J Criswell/J A Gray  
Chairmen