

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE DELIVERY) held in the Council Chamber, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 8th January 2008.

PRESENT: Councillor S J Criswell – Chairman.

Councillors J D Ablewhite, Mrs M Banerjee, K J Churchill, Mrs K E Cooper, J E Garner, D A Giles, Mrs C A Godley, P G Mitchell, J M Sadler, P K Ursell and J S Watt.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors R W D Bailey and Mrs P A Jordan.

54. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4th December 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

55. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

56. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 - FORWARD PLAN

The Panel considered the current Forward Plan of Key Decisions (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which had been prepared by the Leader for the period 1st January to 30th April 2008. Members were acquainted with the various strategies that would be submitted to future Overview and Scrutiny meetings.

57. MIGRANT WORKERS IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE

The Panel gave consideration to a report by the Community Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on migrant workers in Huntingdonshire. In introducing the report the Community Manager, Mr D Smith, referred to the recent increase in migrant workers arriving in new areas of the Country and specifically in Huntingdonshire. He recommended that the figures should be treated cautiously as data was difficult to obtain. Members' attention was drawn to the key areas of activity for the District Council regarding migrant workers. Mr Smith concluded by outlining the additional financial burden on Councils in a number of service areas for which no additional funding was available.

In response to a question by the Chairman, Mr Smith informed the Members of the remit and work of the Cambridgeshire Migrant Workers Network which comprised agencies that engaged with migrant workers. The Panel discussed migrants' entitlement to

benefits and noted that only limited benefits were available.

Having discussed the effect of migrant workers on local businesses and on the economy, Members discussed the language and accommodation problems migrant workers experienced and the cessation of funding for the Regional College for language courses. With regard to the latter the Panel suggested that the Local Strategic Partnership should lobby the Government for Cambridgeshire to become an English for Speakers of Other Languages targeted area.

The Panel commented on the need for improved recognition of migrant workers qualifications and for partner organisations to refer unregistered workers to other appropriate agencies.

In response to a question submitted to the Panel by Councillor Mrs P A Jordan, Mr Smith reported that the Citizens Advice Bureau was one of the most active organisations working with migrant workers and he explained the additional resource burdens on the Bureau caused by language difficulties which prolonged client interviews.

Following a suggestion by Councillor J M Sadler that the Council should establish a register of interpreters, the Panel was informed of the role of the Migrant Gateway which included providing interpreters for employers.

58. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to individuals and is subject to an obligation of confidentiality.

59. ENHANCED CLEANSING SERVICES: PILOT STUDY

In pursuit of the study on Town Centre Cleaning Regimes, the Panel considered a report by Mr R Ward, the Head of Operations, (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the current arrangements for cleansing in the District and details of options to increase service levels in St Ives. Mr Ward reminded Members of the background to the study and provided a detailed explanation of the options. In particular, he referred to the street cleansing standards the Council had adopted and the current financial constraints within which Council managers were working.

Members commented on the cleanliness of the District's town centres as a result of the Saturday night time economy and the adverse effect of litter on Sunday trade and tourism. Mr Ward outlined the financial implications for the Council of providing a full cleansing service on Sundays principally arising from its health and safety responsibilities.

Having considered alternative ways of achieving enhanced levels of street cleansing, the Panel discussed the options contained in the report. Given the levels of litter in towns on Sundays, Members expressed general support for the introduction of a full cleansing service on every day of the week. As a result, it was

RESOLVED

that a further report be submitted to the Panel's meeting in March giving full details including costs of providing a full cleansing service on every day of the week.

In response to questions by the Chairman, the Head of Operations provided the Panel with updates on the move to Eastfield House and on future plans for kerb-side glass recycling.

60. READMITTANCE OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the public be readmitted to the meeting.

61. DISABILITY ACCESS STUDY

With the aid of a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel was acquainted with progress of the study on Disability Access. With regard to a list of potential organisations to consult on the Council's policies, it was suggested that each should be asked whether they would be prepared to assist the Council in this way.

62. PATIENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT FORUMS - ANNUAL REPORT

The Patient and Public Involvement Forums Annual Report 2006/07 National Summary (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) was received and noted. It was decided to await the establishment of Local Involvement Networks before considering whether to undertake any studies on health matters.

63. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE DELIVERY) - PROGRESS

The Panel received and noted a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which contained details of actions taken in response to recent discussions and decisions and reviewing the programme of studies. Members accepted a suggestion that Councillor D Harty should continue on the Older Persons Working Group until the study was concluded.

Updates were received on the studies on the Adoption of Roads and Sewers, Grant Aid and the State of the District Consultation.

64. SCRUTINY

The 79th edition of the Decision Digest was received and noted.

Chairman