

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE SUPPORT) held in the Council Chamber, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 15 January 2008.

PRESENT: Councillor J A Gray – Chairman.

Councillors M G Baker, K M Baker, J T Bell, P H Dakers, J W Davies, P J Downes, A N Gilbert, P M D Godfrey, Ms S Kemp, L W McGuire, M F Newman and R J West.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors D Harty and R G Tuplin.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor P L E Bucknell.

64. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 11th December 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

65. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

66. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000: FORWARD PLAN

The Panel considered and noted the current Forward Plan of Key Decisions (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) scheduled for consideration by the Cabinet, which had been prepared by the Leader of the Council.

The Head of Administration informed the Panel of the background and likely content of a report on the sale of land previously occupied by St Neots Outdoor Pool.

67. CAR PARKING STRATEGY AND REVISED PARKING CHARGES

(Councillor P L E Bucknell, Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, Environment and Transport was in attendance for this Item).

Following an introduction by the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, Environment and Transport and Head of Planning Services, consideration was given to a report by the latter (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to which was attached a proposed Car Parking Strategy Action Plan which had addressed the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) and Cabinet at their meetings held on 9th October and 18th October 2007 respectively.

Further to Minute No. 07/37, the Chairman reminded Members that they had considered the original draft action plan at the Panel's October 2007 meeting and had submitted a number of proposals to Cabinet. Arising from those recommendations, Members were informed that a public consultation exercise had been carried out by the Working Party during November and December to obtain the views of relevant stakeholders.

Councillor Bucknell advised that thorough consideration had been given to the recommendations made by the Panel. On the basis of the evidence available and in the light of the consultation exercise, the Working Party had felt that the action plan was robust but nevertheless needed to be reviewed in 18 months, given the rapidly changing circumstances in various parts of the District.

The Chairman expressed disappointment, on behalf of the Panel, that of the recommendations made by the Panel and Cabinet, only one appeared to have been accepted by the Working Party to extend the long-stay period in car parks from 9 hours to 10 before the charge was increased to defer commuters.

Having reviewed in detail the content of the draft Action Plan, Members questioned whether the consultation exercise involving stakeholders from 200 local groups and organisations had been sufficiently broad. The Panel expressed particular disappointment that its recommendation for a higher incentive than the proposed 25% reduction in the cost of a car parking season ticket for drivers with vehicles of low CO₂ emissions had not been accepted. As a result, Members did not feel that the action plan was sufficiently ambitious to produce a noticeable impact in encouraging motorists to consider a low emission vehicle when next purchasing a car.

Notwithstanding the Working Party's view that income generated by increasing car parking charges should not be ring-fenced in view of the Council's existing spending on transport, the Panel felt that the wording of the existing car parking strategy should be reinforced to ensure that any surplus income be used to encourage integrated, sustainable and accessible transport.

Having thanked the Executive Councillor, Officers and Members of the Working Party for their work in producing the car parking strategy action plan, the Panel acknowledged that in order to progress the matter, the action plan should be implemented but reviewed with immediate effect after its introduction.

RESOLVED

that Cabinet be informed of the Panel's views on the proposed car parking action plan as follows:-

- (a) that the Panel have no objection to the implementation of the action plan to enable changes to car parking charges in Huntingdonshire to be implemented;
- (b) the Panel's disappointment over the Working Party's retention of a 25% reduction in season ticket charges for low emission vehicles and its serious reservation

that this will not have a significant impact in persuading motorists to choose vehicles with low emissions in the future;

- (c) that any surplus income generated through increased car parking charges be spent in accordance with the current strategy;
- (d) the Panel recommend that a further review of the car parking strategy be commenced immediately after the existing changes have been implemented to address in particular the more environmentally sensitive use of the car.

68. A QUALITY CHARTER FOR GROWTH IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE

(Councillor P L E Bucknell, Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, Environment and Transport was in attendance for this Item).

A report by the Head of Planning Services was presented by the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, Environment and Transport (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) summarising the current draft of the Quality Charter for Growth in Cambridgeshire. The Head of Planning Services informed the Panel that Cambridgeshire Horizons had been working with a range of partners to draft the Quality Charter in order to achieve higher standards in the new housing developments which were planned for Cambridgeshire.

Arising from Members' concerns regarding the inconsistency of the various references to Cambridgeshire and Cambridge used within the document, the Head of Planning Services confirmed that this was intended to apply to the Cambridge Sub-Region only. In answer to further questions, he advised that the proposed Core Strategy for the District already was underpinned by sustainable development proposals which would be supplemented by the Quality Charter Proposals.

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report be noted and the Head of Planning Services be requested to point out to Cambridgeshire Horizons the need for consistency in the geographical terminology used in the document.

69. WORK PLAN STUDIES

The Panel considered and noted a report by the Head of Administration (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book) reviewing the Panel's programme of studies.

Members were informed of the progress made by the Working Group looking at the Council's travel plan and that a further meeting of the Group was likely to take place prior to the next Panel meeting. The Head of Administration advised that it was hoped that a report on the

findings of that Working Group, together with the Cycling Working Group, could be submitted to the Panel's February meeting.

The Panel noted that a meeting of the Town Centre Initiatives Working Group had been scheduled for 23rd January 2008 when interviews with the Chairmen and Town Centre Managers would take place.

Members also discussed the future studies that had been identified at previous meetings and the Head of Administration was requested to ascertain whether a review of Section 106 Agreement arrangements was to be commissioned by the Cabinet. Referring to the proposed future study of HGV parking throughout the District, the Panel requested that preliminary work should commence on drawing together the pertinent issues to enable the study to commence.

70. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE SUPPORT)

The Panel considered and noted a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) reviewing the Panel's progress to date on issues that had been raised previously.

Further to Minute No. 07/47, the Panel were acquainted by Councillor A N Gilbert with details of a meeting of the Cambridgeshire Together Joint Accountability Committee that he had attended, during which concerns regarding the accountability arrangements for Cambridgeshire Together had been raised. In response to a question by a Member, it was agreed that copies of the Minutes of future meetings of the Joint Accountability Committee should be circulated to all Panel Members.

The Panel congratulated the staff of the Council's Call Centre in achieving a Charter Mark for the standard of its service to the public.

71. SCRUTINY

The Panel considered and noted the latest edition of the Council's Decision Digest, summarising the Council's decisions made in the past month.

Chairman