

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, 5 February 2008.

PRESENT: Councillor S J Criswell – Chairman.

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

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors J M Sadler and P K Ursell.

65. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8th January 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

66. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillors Mrs M Banerjee, K J Churchill and Mrs C A Godley declared personal interests in respect of Minute No. 71 by virtue of being members of the Board of Directors of Luminus.

67. DISABILITY ACCESS STUDY

The Panel were advised that as Mrs G Bird, Forum Manager, Directions Plus, was unable to attend the meeting the presentation on access for those with disabilities would not go ahead. It was hoped to rearrange this for the next meeting.

68. 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 February to 31st May 2008. Members commented on the fact that fewer items in the Plan fell within their remit than the Service Support Panel, which was something that had regularly occurred in the course of the current Municipal Year. As a result it was suggested that Executive Councillors whose responsibilities were linked to the Panel might be invited to future meetings to discuss their planned work in the next year and to identify the contribution the Panel could make to this work. It was also suggested that to enable the Panel to fulfil its role the remit of the Panels might be reviewed particularly in respect of the procedures involved in the allocation of Section 106 money.

69. STATE OF THE DISTRICT CONSULTATION WORKING GROUP

The Panel gave consideration to the final report by the Working Group (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). In introducing the report Councillor Churchill referred to the difficulties in engaging the public particularly on a District level. He informed the Panel of the justification for recommending that four area events were held in various formats. Councillor Churchill also advised the Panel of the likely cost of staging the four events and the negligible difference in cost whether one or four events were held.

In response to a question Mrs H Gilling, the Communications and Marketing Manager, outlined the ways in which the engagement events might be promoted. The principal marketing channel would be District Wide. Mrs Gilling expressed the view that it was important to make it clear to the public that the Council wanted to talk and listen to the local community. Other potential publicity channels included the local press and radio and advertisements on the Council's vehicle fleet.

In discussing the proposals the Panel took account of their potential to contribute towards the Council's Consultation and Engagement Strategy and the Sustainable Community Strategy. Members also recognised that the events might help the Council to comply with future requirements placed on it to engage with communities. It was also stressed that Parish, Town, District and County Councils should be involved in the events and that the recommendations on chairmanship should be adhered to. Having endorsed the principle of holding engagement events, it was

RESOLVED

that the report be approved for submission to the Cabinet and the recommendations endorsed.

70. LOCAL PETITIONS AND CALLS FOR ACTION

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 legislative changes affecting overview and scrutiny and suggested responses to consultations on local petitions and calls for action. It was noted that the powers of overview and scrutiny committees would be enhanced and that they would be able to require information from the County Council and certain partner authorities. It was also noted that there would be a duty for the Executive to respond in writing to overview and scrutiny reports and recommendations within two months.

The Panel were advised that a Countywide seminar was planned for Members to discuss the implementation of the proposals and the arrangements for scrutinising the Local Area Agreements. The Panel noted that the changes would enable councillors to refer a local government matter to the relevant overview and scrutiny committee and that crime and disorder matters would be referred to the Service Delivery Panel. Having noted that a response to a petition would amount to a "call for action", Members expressed support for the changes and endorsed the responses to the consultation.

Whereupon, the Panel

RESOLVED

- (a) that the contents of the report be received and noted;
and
- (b) that the responses to the consultation paper as set out in Annex A to the report now submitted be endorsed.

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

The Panel received and noted a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which has been 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 noted that the Town Centre Cleaning Regimes report would not be available until April and that it was hoped to rearrange the Disability Access presentation for the March meeting. With regard to the latter the Panel were informed of the procedures the County Council had in place for Town and Parish councils to request the installation of and repairs to dropped kerbs.

Councillor Mrs C A Godley informed the Panel of progress of the Adoption of Road and Sewers Working Group. Responsibility for sewers under various roads in Eaton Socon, St Neots and in Huntingdon was to be investigated further and discussions were planned with representatives of Anglia Water.

Councillor P G Mitchell reported that the next step in the Grant Aid study would be to meet with those responsible for administering grant schemes to investigate the criteria for each one.

72. SCRUTINY

The 80th edition of the Decision Digest was received and noted. In response to a question by Councillor J E Garner, it was reported that a decision on the location of additional travellers sites in the District had not yet been taken.

Councillor P G Mitchell commented on experiences in some neighbouring local authority areas regarding migrant workers.

Chairman