

Monthly summary of the decisions taken at meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny and other Panels for the period 4th to 29th February 2008.

FINANCIAL MONITORING

The Head of Financial Services has drawn to the Cabinet's attention variations to the approved Capital Programme and spending variations in the revenue budget for the current year.

MEDIUM TERM PLAN – REQUESTS FOR THE RELEASE OF FUNDS

The Cabinet has agreed to release funding from the Medium Term Plans for the award of disabled facilities grants and for the replacement of network and survey equipment.

CAR PARKING STRATEGY – PROPOSED ACTION PLAN

The Cabinet has been updated on development of the Car Parking Strategy Action Plan.

The Cabinet has been reminded that the plan was the subject of a consultation exercise carried out by the Car Parking Working Party during November and December 2007 and has been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support). In discussing the Panel's response to the Working Party's recommendations, Executive Councillors have expressed their

support for a reduction of 25% in the cost of a car parking season ticket for cars with CO₂ emissions of 120g/km or less being of the opinion that this represents a fair and equitable discount. With regard to the Panel's view that any surplus income generated by increased car parking should be ring-fenced to provide integrated, sustainable and accessible transport, the Cabinet has suggested that this would be inappropriate. In total, the Cabinet has –

- ◆ endorsed the contents of the Car Parking Strategy Action Plan for Huntingdonshire;
- ◆ requested that steps be taken to amend the current Off-Street Parking Places Order to reflect the changes proposed in the Action Plan and their implementation with effect from 1st June 2008;
- ◆ approved the proposed car parking charges referred to as the first option; and
- ◆ endorsed a review of the arrangements following a period of 12 months with effect from the introduction of the revised charges.

Subsequently, the Cabinet's decision regarding this matter was called-in by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support). The Panel were disappointed that the Cabinet decided to accept the Car Parking Working Party's recommendation of 25% rather than an innovative 100% and expressed reservations as to the use of surplus income and the review of the new arrangements. As a result, the Cabinet has reconsidered their previous decision and have –

- ◆ agreed to introduce a reduction of 50% in the cost of a car parking season ticket for cars with CO₂ emissions of 120g/km or less as part of the implementation of the Car Parking Action Plan with effect from 1st June 2008;
- ◆ requested that the wider issues of encouraging the use of low emission vehicles, public transport, cycling and walking be dealt with in the development of the Environment Strategy and in the next review of the Car Parking Action Plan;
- ◆ confirmed that surplus income from car parking charges would not be ring-fenced for integrated, sustainable and accessible transport;
- ◆ amended their previous decision to introduce car parking charges based on the first option deciding on the second option instead;
- ◆ amended their previous resolution to review arrangements after 12 months and agreed that issues relating to climate change in the Car Parking Action Plan should be reviewed following a period of 6 months after the introduction of the revised charges; and
- ◆ requested that further consideration be given by the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, a representative of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) and relevant officers to the initial scoping for the next review of the Car Parking Action Plan.

ST. NEOTS OUTDOOR POOL

The Cabinet has authorised the Chief Executive, after consultation with the Leader of the Council, to approve terms for the disposal of the former St. Neots Outdoor Pool site by the St. Neots Swimming Pool Trust. The outdoor pool had been operating at a loss for many years and, subject to the consent of the Charity Commission, the Trust wished to dispose of the site and reinvest the proceeds of the sale in an alternative recreation facility to serve St. Neots.

FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS TO RIVERSIDE PARK, HUNTINGDON

In discussing a Masterplan for the enhancement of the Riverside Park, Huntingdon, the Overview and

Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) has suggested that the current proposal for tree planting to separate the two mini soccer pitches be withdrawn so that, if the need were to arise, a larger pitch could be reinstated. Their views will be incorporated into a larger consultation exercise for the document which has been given the go ahead by the Cabinet. The proposed enhancement scheme includes new planting, footpaths and cycleways, additional recreational areas, new hard surfacing, moorings and signage.

STATE OF THE DISTRICT ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

The Cabinet has been acquainted with the findings of a review by a Working Group of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) into the principle and potential benefits of holding events to engage Huntingdonshire residents in discussing the Council's strategies and services. Having raised issues regarding the accuracy of the predicted resource and financial implications of holding four events per annum against the original concept of a bi-annual "state of the district" half-day conference, the Cabinet requested a further report on the financial implications of the proposal and its link with the Council's Consultation and Engagement Strategy.

ENFORCEMENT POLICIES

The Cabinet has been informed of the publication of a regulators' compliance code by the Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform. The new code

will form a central part of the Government's better regulation agenda with the aim of ensuring a risk based, proportionate and flexible approach to regulatory inspection and enforcement that allows and encourages economic progress. The Cabinet has authorised the relevant Heads of Service to review their enforcement policies having specific regard to the content of the new code and to approve any necessary changes after consultation with the relevant Executive Councillor. The Licensing and Protection Panel have endorsed this course of action.

STREET TRADING

The Licensing and Protection Panel has reviewed the present arrangements in terms of street trading within the District as a result of the range of events organised recently by various town centre management groups and others. As speciality markets fall outside the definition of an established market and should only take place on designated streets, the Panel has decided to issue a street trading consent charging the appropriate fee to the relevant organiser, making them responsible for the individual traders. The Panel has also agreed to change the designation of Market Hill, Bridge Street, Crown Street and the Broadway in St. Ives and part of the Great Whyte, Ramsey from prohibited streets to consent streets to enable trading to take place in those streets.

DESIGNATED PUBLIC PLACES ORDER – WHEATFIELDS, ST. IVES

Further information can be obtained from the Democratic Services Section ☎ (01480) 388007

The Panel was updated on the effectiveness, from a policing perspective, of the Designated Public Places Order made for the Wheatfields Recreation Area, St. Ives which came into force on 1st May 2007. Whilst the order has proved beneficial in assisting the Police to reduce anti-social behaviour associated with irresponsible alcohol consumption, further information on the ongoing situation is awaited before further requests for additional orders are considered.

LICENSING ACT 2003 - DELEGATIONS

The Committee has been informed of an amendment to the Licensing Act 2003 which enables licensing authorities, on receipt of an application from a Senior Police Officer in cases of serious crime and disorder, to attach interim conditions to premises licences pending a full review. As action will be required within 48 hours this may mean communicating with sub-committee Members electronically or by telephone. There are also new powers for local authorities and Police to designate alcohol disorder zones as a last resort to tackle alcohol related crime and disorder, this will enable a local authority to charge licensees for additional enforcement activity affecting all licensed premises within the zone. Although the new power has yet to be brought into effect by Regulation, further information will be brought to the Committee's

attention when the Regulations are made and guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT – 2000: FORWARD PLAN

A suggestion has been made by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) to invite Executive Councillors whose responsibilities are linked to the Panel to future meetings to discuss their planned work in the next year. Suggestions have also been made to review the remit of the Panels, particularly in respect of the procedures involved in the allocation of Section 106 money.

LOCAL PETITIONS AND CALLS FOR ACTION

The Overview and Scrutiny Panels (Service Delivery) and (Service Support) have received a report on legislative change which could affect the overview and scrutiny function and suggested responses to the Consultation Paper on Local Petitions and Calls for Action. The Panels have noted that the powers of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees would be enhanced, with crime and disorder matters to be referred to the Service Delivery Panel. The Service Support Panel has commented that a minimum of 100 signatures should be required for a local petition but that some flexibility should be permissible. Members of both Panels expressed support for the changes and have endorsed the response to the consultation paper subject to the

inclusion of the comments made by both Panels.

The Cabinet has similarly been acquainted with the implications for the Council's overview and scrutiny function of the Local Government and Public Involvement and Health Act 2007 and the Police and Justice Act 2006 which are likely to be introduced later this year and has authorised the Head of Administration to respond to the consultation paper on behalf of the Council.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE DELIVERY) - PROGRESS

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) has been acquainted with the progress of its ongoing studies. Members noted that the Town Centre Cleaning Regimes report would be available in April and it was noted that a presentation on disability access would be arranged in the near future.

GROWING SUCCESS: CUSTOMER SERVICE, COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING AND CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework) has considered the Customer Service, Communications and Marketing and Consultation and Engagement Strategies, which have been revised following the adoption of an updated version of Growing Success, the Council's Corporate Plan, in June 2007. The Strategies will be reviewed every three years

and their respective action plans on an annual basis.

With regard to the Customer Service Strategy, the Panel has been advised that the formation of a Customer Services Team under the direct responsibility of a single Head of Service together with the effective use of resources will support the delivery of the Strategy. The Panel has been informed of the background to the decision to expand and strengthen the former Communications and Consultation Strategy by creating two separate Strategies for Communication and Marketing and Consultation and Engagement.

The documents will be used primarily as internal corporate Strategies, with an executive summary of each being made available on the website for public use. Performance against the Strategies will be reported through the performance management system. The Panel and the Cabinet, to which the strategies also had been referred, have expressed support of the documents and looked forward to their implementation.

PETITION BY ST AUDREY LANE RESIDENTS, ST IVES

The Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) has been informed of the problems experienced by residents of St Audrey Lane, St Ives in relation to inadequate foul sewerage systems discharging into homes and gardens in times of even moderate rain fall. The Panel expressed concerns

regarding clarity over where the responsibility for such matters lay. The Panels noted that correspondence from Anglian Water suggested that they were unaware of the extent of the problem. In the light of the information and evidence available, the Panel has asked for a robust reply to be sent to the company in addition to a report collated on the responsibilities of the relevant agencies with a view to inviting Anglian Water to attend a future meeting of the Panel.

SPEAKING AT DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PANEL MEETINGS

The Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) has reviewed the procedure for public speaking at meetings of the Development Control Panel. Public speaking was introduced following a Scrutiny Panel investigation. The Panel has discussed the success of engaging the public in the decision making process on development control applications and has agreed to coordinate the review inviting comments from all Members before submitting the outcome to the Development Control Panel.

CYCLING WORKING GROUP

The Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) has approved the findings of the Cycling Working Group for submission to the Cabinet. It was the Working Group's objective to investigate the Council's expenditure on cycling in Huntingdonshire and its effectiveness in providing dedicated cycle paths and promoting cycling

as a means of transport. The Panel has discussed the need to establish a clear link between Section 106 contributions for transport and its expenditure on individual cycleway schemes in Huntingdonshire and has made a number of recommendations to Cabinet.

Subsequently the Cabinet has noted the Panel's recommendations and have requested a further report addressing the wider issue of Section 106 funding and partnership working, that discussions be held with Cambridgeshire County Council on the Cycling Strategy and on the issue of partnership working on cycling provision.

TRAVEL PLAN WORKING GROUP

As part of the Working Group's study of the Council's Travel Plan, the question of travel allowances and incentives/disincentives for Members and Officers to use more environmentally sensitive means of transport has been considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) and their conclusions submitted to Cabinet. The Panel believe that the Council should be innovative in its approach to the question of mileage allowances and the availability of incentives to reduce, in particular, use of heavily polluting cars as an example of good practice.

In approving the Working Group's recommendations, the Cabinet has asked why changes had only been proposed for mileage allowances for Members and not employees and suggested that further work be

undertaken into alternative forms of transport. Furthermore, the Cabinet has requested that consideration be given to linking this work with the emerging Environment Strategy, Car Parking Action Plan and Travel Plan.

WORK PLAN STUDIES – SERVICE SUPPORT

The Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) has agreed to establish two new Working Groups; one to investigate aspects of the Council's Section 106 Agreement mechanism for the negotiation of agreements and the distribution of money received; the other to identify and review the issue of Heavy Goods Vehicle parking throughout the District.

THE HEMINGFORDS AND EARITH CONSERVATION AREAS: BOUNDARY REVIEW AND CHARACTER ASSESSMENT CONSULTATION DOCUMENTS

The Development Control Panel has welcomed the publication of consultation documents for the Hemingford and Earith Conservation Areas and congratulated Officers on the quality of the documents.

The Council is committed to the production of Character Assessments to provide an analysis of the special interest of all 60 Conservation Areas in the District. These documents will be used to guide decisions on planning matters and other changes to ensure that the character and appearance of the Conservation Area is not diminished. The Boundary Reviews of both

villages have been undertaken to update the boundaries last drawn in 1974 for the Hemingfords and 1979 in Earith. The content of all documents has been endorsed by the Panel and recommended for adoption as Council policy to the Cabinet. During their discussion, Councillor T V Rogers drew the Panel's attention to the potential for construction traffic, serving the proposed Northstowe development to take a route to the site via the A1123 and Earith to avoid congestion on the A14. The Panel acknowledged that this potential increase in HGV traffic could have an impact on the Conservation Area through damage to buildings and subsidence.

CONSULTATION – CREATION OF NEW TOWN AT NORTHSTOWE AND ASSOCIATED COMMUNITY AND HIGHWAY INFRASTRUCTURE WORKS

The Council has formally been consulted by South Cambridgeshire District Council on proposals for the development of the new town of Northstowe. The Panel has indicated its support for the development and encouraged South Cambridgeshire to secure early delivery of the new town and its related infrastructure improvements to avoid the possibility of any increase on the growth pressures facing Huntingdonshire.

Given Councillor Roger's comments on the impact of construction traffic on the Earith Conservation Area, the Panel has requested South Cambridgeshire to require by condition, the submission of a

construction access scheme and for the District Council to be re-consulted on the conditions to be attached to the planning consent for the development.

Control Manager, to vary the list as appropriate to reflect changes in government guidance and local circumstances.

ENFORCEMENT ACTION

The Development Control Panel has endorsed the approach to be adopted by the Head of Planning Services in the investigation which will discover whether there have been breaches of planning control relating to the unauthorised occupation of various lodges, houseboats, narrowboats, boats and flats at the Hartford Marina in Wyton.

ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITY 2007 AND PROPOSED OBJECTIVES FOR 2008

The Development Control Panel has noted the extent of enforcement activity undertaken by the Enforcement Team during 2007 and endorsed seven new objectives for the Team in 2008 which include the updating of the Team's web pages to raise the profile and understanding of enforcement work.

VALIDATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS: STANDARDISATION OF PLANNING APPLICATION FORMS

Following consultation, the Development Control Panel has adopted a list of local requirements which the District Council can require to validate a planning application submitted under the new IAPP system and authorised the Head of Planning Services, or in his absence the Development