

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, 4th March 2008.

PRESENT: Councillor S J Criswell – Chairman.

Councillors J D Ablewhite, Mrs M Banerjee, Mrs K E Cooper, J E Garner, Mrs P A Jordan, P G Mitchell, J M Sadler and J S Watt.

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

73. COUNCILLOR MRS C A GODLEY

The Panel stood in silence as a mark of respect following the recent death of Councillor Mrs C A Godley.

74. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5th February 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

75. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were received.

76. 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 March to 30th June 2008. It was agreed to invite the Head of Housing Services to present an item on the Outcome of the Cambridgeshire Supporting People Home Improvement Agency Review at the next meeting. Further information was also requested on the Sports Facilities Strategy for Huntingdonshire for the June meeting.

77. STATE OF THE DISTRICT ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

The Panel considered a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the Cabinet's decisions on the Panel's recommendations arising from the study on State of the District Engagement Events. In considering the report the Panel expressed their disappointment at the Cabinet's response. Owing to the need to begin promoting the events at the earliest possible opportunity, the Panel requested the Working Group that undertook the study to liaise with the Head of Policy and Strategic Services to

address the request for further information. In order to expedite the process, it was

RESOLVED

- a) that the State of the District Engagement Working Group be requested to discuss with the Head of Policy and Strategic Services the Cabinets' decisions, and
- b) that the Central Services Manager, after consultation with the Chairman, be authorised to submit a report to the Cabinet setting out the information requested.

78. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Panel considered a report by the Head of Policy and Strategic Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) containing details of the Council's performance against its priority objectives. In introducing the findings of the Corporate Plan Working Group on the report, Councillor P G Mitchell commented that a number of the key activities that contributed to the priority objectives allocated to the Panel fell outside its remit. He also reported on the Working Group's suggested areas for further investigation, which included green energy generation, the promotion of the Council's leisure centres, grant aid and home improvement grants. Finally, Councillor Mitchell drew Members' attention to an opportunity to contribute towards the objective to achieve a low level of homelessness through grant funding available for the acquisition of gypsy and traveller sites. With regard to the latter, owing to the limited time for which the funding was available, Councillor Mitchell and the Chairman undertook to pursue this directly with Officers.

Councillor Mrs M Banerjee commented on the low level of funding available to registered social landlords and on the delivery of affordable housing through the development control process.

Having discussed the data provided for each of the objectives referred to in the report, the Panel expressed their satisfaction with the levels of performance achieved in the year to date. Members also agreed to incorporate the areas suggested for further investigation by the Corporate Plan Working Group into the review of Growing Success. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the report be received and noted.

79. DISABILITY ACCESS STUDY - UPDATE AND OTHER MATTERS

The Panel noted a report on progress of the Disability Access Study (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). Members were informed that the Forum Manager of Directions Plus would attend the April meeting.

The Panel discussed the potential benefits of introducing Blue Routes, which would assist those with disabilities in navigating their way round the District's towns. They might also have the added benefit of influencing the County Council's pavement maintenance

programme. It was agreed to consult the Papworth Trust on whether there existed routes that were regularly used by the disabled.

The principle of providing advocacy services and the organisations that might be involved were considered by the Panel. It was decided to invite a representative of the Hunts Forum of Voluntary Organisations to a future meeting to discuss this matter further.

Members discussed unauthorised parking in disabled bays and the Blue Badge parking permit system. It was agreed that further information should be obtained on the measures in existence to identify abuses of Blue Badge permits and the enforcement that was undertaken.

RESOLVED

- a) that the Papworth Trust be consulted on potential Blue Routes,
- b) that a representative of the Hunts Forum of Voluntary Organisations be invited to a future meeting to discuss local advocacy services, and
- c) that further information be obtained on enforcement action currently taken on the use of Blue Badges.

80. PROMOTING BETTER HEALTH IN OLDER PEOPLE THROUGH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The Panel received and noted the contents of a report by the Working Group (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which had been prepared in response to the Cabinet's request for further financial information with regard to the study on Promoting Better Health in Older People Through Physical Activity. The Panel were advised that the Council's Leisure Development Team had successfully acquired grant funding from 'Well Being in the East' a National Lottery linked agency, for a post of Older Persons' Physical Activity Officer, which would be advertised shortly. An MTP bid also had been submitted to support this role and had been approved by the Council. As a result Members concurred with a suggestion that a commitment had thereby been made to proceed with the pilot programme of exercise for older people and, therefore, they decided that the need to provide further financial information had been obviated. They requested that the Cabinet be informed accordingly. Having also agreed that a review should be undertaken in due course of progress against the Panel's recommendations, it was

RESOLVED

- a) that the contents of the report be noted,
- b) that the study be concluded,
- c) that a review of progress be undertaken in due course, and
- d) that the Cabinet be formally notified of the outcome of the study.

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

The Panel considered 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. Members noted that the report on Town Centre Cleaning Regimes would be submitted to the meeting in April.

Councillor Mrs P Jordan was appointed to the Adoption of Roads and Sewers Working Group, to replace Councillor Mrs C A Godley.

82. SCRUTINY

In scrutinising the 81st Edition of the digest of decisions taken by the Cabinet and other Panels etc, Members raised the following queries:

Car Parking Strategy – Proposed Action Plan - in response to a question by Councillor J E Garner, the Panel was acquainted with the current position with regard to the Car Parking Strategy Action Plan. Members expressed concern that some of the original recommendations of the Car Parking Working Party were not reflected in the decisions reported.

Speaking at Development Control Panel meetings - Councillor P G Mitchell informed the Panel of his views on the introduction of public speaking at meetings of the Development Control Panel.

Street Trading/Designated Public Places Order/Licensing Act 2003 - Councillor J M Sadler gave an account of changes affecting Street Trading and delegations under the Licensing Act 2003 and also advised Members of the success of the Designated Public Places Order in Wheatfields, St. Ives.

Chairman