
Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery)

**Reports of the meetings held on 4th March and
1st April 2008**

Matters for Information

30. STATE OF THE DISTRICT ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

The Panel has been acquainted with the Cabinet's response to the Panel's recommendations arising from the study on holding State of the District engagement events. In order to meet the request for further information, the Panel has requested the Working Group that undertook the study work to meet with the Head of Policy and Strategic Services with a view to submitting the information requested at the earliest possible opportunity.

31. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

In discussing the Council's performance against its priority objectives, the Panel has been acquainted with the conclusions reached by the Corporate Plan Working Group on the quarterly monitoring report. Having noted that a number of the key activities that contribute to the priority objectives allocated to the Panel fall outside its remit, Members have agreed to incorporate into the review of "Growing Success" suggested areas for further investigation, which include green energy generation, the promotion of the Council's leisure centres, grant aid and home improvement grants. A further suggestion that an opportunity to obtain grant funding for the acquisition of gypsy and traveller sites might contribute towards the objective of achieving a low level of homelessness also has been discussed.

The Panel has commented on the low level of funding available to registered social landlords and the delivery of social housing through the development control process.

Having reviewed the data presented, the Panel has expressed their satisfaction with the levels of performance achieved in the year to date.

32. DISABILITY ACCESS STUDY – UPDATE AND OTHER MATTERS

In pursuit of the Panel's current study on Disability Access in and around the District, the Panel has received a presentation by the

Forum Manager of Directions Plus on her organisation's work. Members have been acquainted with its background, various campaigns and achievements to date.

The Forum Manager has outlined her perception that the Cambridgeshire County Council does not undertake adequate consultation prior to installing dropped kerbs, an issue of concern raised previously by the Panel. There are financial implications if dropped kerbs have to be altered if they are subsequently found to be defective.

The Panel also has discussed with the Forum Manager unauthorised parking in disabled bays and the misuse of Blue Badges. Particular concerns have been raised regarding the process for obtaining Blue Badges and the consequences of their illegal use. The Panel intends to investigate this matter further.

The Panel has considered an initiative to establish a coalition of disability groups. Having noted current proposals for a similar initiative in Essex to extend some of its work into Cambridgeshire, Members have commented that it would be more appropriate for this to be pursued by existing Cambridgeshire disability groups under the leadership of the County Council. In addition the importance of encouraging consultation of disability groups and individuals by the Council on its procedures, policies and planning issues was recognised.

The Panel has been acquainted with progress of various other aspects of the study. Following a disappointing response from the organisations approached, the Panel is to reconsider whether to recommend that a list of potential organisations to consult on the Council's policies is established. The Panel has decided to invite a representative of the Hunts Forum of Voluntary Organisations to a future meeting to discuss various matters, including the provision of advocacy services in the District.

33. PROMOTING BETTER HEALTH IN OLDER PEOPLE THROUGH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The Panel has concluded its study on Promoting Better Health in Older People through Physical Activity. Members have been advised that the Council's Leisure Development Team has successfully acquired a grant funding from "Well Being in the East" to employ an Older Persons' Physical Activity Officer and to provide the necessary marketing, training and equipment associated with the post which would be advertised shortly. An MTP bid also has been approved by the Council to support this role. As a result, the Panel has concluded that a commitment has effectively been made to proceed with the programme of service for older people and that therefore, there is no longer any need to provide the information previously requested by the Cabinet. The Cabinet is to be formally notified accordingly.

34. OUTCOME OF CAMBRIDGESHIRE SUPPORTING PEOPLE HOME IMPROVEMENT REVIEW

The Panel has been acquainted with progress of a review of Home Improvement Agencies in Cambridgeshire. Members have noted the order of funding involved and the preliminary findings on variations between the District Councils on the services offered in terms of their cost and customer satisfaction. Huntingdonshire compares favourably against the other District Councils in both criteria. Having discussed the current position with regard to the Occupational Therapy service, the Panel has received details of the Council's budgetary provision for Home Improvement Grants.

35. WORK PROGRAMME AND ENGAGEMENT WITH THE EXECUTIVE

The Panel has reviewed the way in which it engages with the Executive. The Panel's attention has been drawn to the fact that in the current year fewer items in the Forward Plan have fallen under the remit of the Service Delivery Panel compared with the Service Support Panel and the implications of this for the Panel's role.

Having considered inviting Executive Councillors to future meetings to discuss their plans for the forthcoming year and to create a work programme in which the Scrutiny Panel constructively contributes to the Cabinet's business, the Panel has decided to await the outcome of discussions between the Scrutiny Panel Chairmen before taking any action on this matter.

36. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE DELIVERY) – PROGRESS

The Panel has reviewed its programme of studies at each of its meetings. A report on Town Centre Cleaning Regimes is to be considered at a future meeting.

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

Other Matters of Interest

37. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 – FORWARD PLAN

The Panel has been acquainted with details of the relevant Forward Plan of Key Decisions and has decided to examine an item on the Adoption of Local Standards for the provision of Sports Facilities in Huntingdonshire at a future meeting.

38. SCRUTINY

The Panel considered the latest edition of the Decision Digest and discussed matters contained therein.

S J Criswell
Chairman