
Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Service Support)

**Report of the meetings held on 8th April and
10th June 2008**

Matters for Information

1. SEWERAGE PROBLEMS, ST AUDREY'S LANE, ST IVES

Following the consideration of a petition signed by 26 people at its February meeting, the Panel has considered further information on the sewerage problems experienced by residents in St Audrey's Lane, St Ives and the responsibilities of those parties involved in the drainage of this area. The Panel's attention has been drawn to the Water Supply and Sewerage Services (Customer Service Standards) 2008 which came into force on 1st April 2008 and provides for financial compensation to customers for each and every occurrence of internal and external flooding from foul sewers and this information has been conveyed to the residents.

Having listened to the concerns of local residents and been advised of the outcome of recent discussions and correspondence with Anglian Water, the Panel has invited representatives from the company to attend its meeting in July 2008 to discuss potential solutions to the problem. In the interim, the Panel has appointed Councillors K M Baker, M G Baker and J W Davies to a working group to gather further information from local residents about the extent and frequency of the problems and they have visited the site and discussed the situation with them in readiness for the meeting with Anglian Water.

2. REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY – PLANNING FOR GYPSY & TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION (DRAFT POLICY)

The Panel has considered the Council's suggested response to the draft policy by the East of England Regional Assembly on the number of gypsy and traveller pitches to be accommodated by each local planning authority as part of the Regional Spatial Strategy.

In doing so, the Panel endorsed the recommended response as a practical and sensible approach to the draft. However concerns have been expressed about the potential for some authorities to object to the proposed allocation if they wish to make no or inadequate provision for gypsies and travellers and for any consequential re-

distribution of pitches which could adversely impact on Huntingdonshire's currently proposed allocation.

The Panel is also concerned that the preparation of a Development Plan Document (DPD) to determine sites for gypsies and travellers in the District is unlikely to be finalised until some time in 2009 as part of the Local Development Framework (LDF). Having regard to the potential difficulty in dealing with unauthorised encampments and determining planning applications in the interim, the Panel has suggested to the Cabinet that the DPD should be developed as soon as practicable within the LDF timescale.

3. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK: THE CORE STRATEGY SUBMISSION DOCUMENT

The Panel has considered the submission document for the Core Strategy before it is approved by Council for formal submission to the Secretary of State. (Item No.1 of the report to Cabinet refers).

The Panel has expressed its support for the proposed policies within the submission document but considers that insufficient importance has been paid to the role of agriculture in the local economy and as a local land use. Recent world food shortages and the growth in the use of bio-fuels has increased the demand for agricultural crops but the Panel feels that the Core Strategy has failed to recognise the emergence of these trends in recent months, for example by referring in the Core Strategy to the historic role of agriculture and food production in Huntingdonshire. Although the Core Strategy places emphasis on the need for strategic green space enhancement, the Panel is concerned at the possible implication that access and enjoyment of the countryside may be regarded as more important than the contribution that agriculture makes to the local economy and wider market. The Panel has therefore suggested that a change in wording and emphasis to retain the value of local agriculture in the Core Strategy would be advisable and helpful.

4. CYCLING IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE

Following the conclusion of its investigations into the Council's expenditure on cycling in Huntingdonshire earlier in the year, the Panel has been acquainted with details of progress being made in developing a revised action plan for safe cycle routes, including a revised list of cycle schemes for Huntingdonshire.

Although the Panel is pleased with the progress which has been made, Members remain of the view that the County Council should invest more funding into cycleway development in the District. Having been advised that a revised list of cycle routes is to be submitted to the Huntingdonshire Traffic Management Area Joint Committee (AJC), the Panel has also raised questions over the involvement of ward members in revising and updating the list which originates from the Cycling Strategy last approved by the Council in 2000.

5. PARKING FOR HEAVY GOODS VEHICLES

The Panel has received the final report of its Working Group which had been established to investigate the issue of Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) parking throughout the District. The matter had been raised initially by Councillor P Dakers in response to the closure of the "Night Owl" lorry parking facility at Alconbury and his concerns relating to a reduction in overnight parking facilities for HGVs across the District.

The Panel has acknowledged that there is a clear need to provide suitable parking on the trunk road network to avoid the problems which arise from a lack of provision for local authorities, local communities and haulage drivers alike. The problem is being compounded by proposals to rationalise lay-by arrangements along the A14 corridor. However, the Panel has recognised that there is very little that the District Council can do in isolation to tackle a national problem and that the Council's main influence on the provision of lorry parking facilities in Huntingdonshire will be through the Local Development Framework in terms of the identification of sites for HGV parking and opposing the redevelopment of closed sites for alternative uses.

Having regard to issues that are being experienced elsewhere within the County, the Panel have concluded that a collaborative approach involving all local authorities within Cambridgeshire would be the most effective way of raising awareness and achieving progress. The Panel has therefore recommended to the Cabinet:-

- ◆ that the County Council be invited to establish a countywide forum, involving the County Council, District Councils, local Members of Parliament, Cambridgeshire Constabulary and HGV operators to lobby Government to investigate the problem urgently and take steps to resolve it;
- ◆ that the matter be raised through the Cambridgeshire Together: Local Area Agreement Board; and
- ◆ that the District Council as local planning authority seek to influence the development of suitable HGV parking opportunities on the trunk roads across the District.

6. MONITORING OF SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS PLANNING OBLIGATIONS

The Panel has been updated on the receipt and expenditure of money negotiated under Section 106 Agreements by the Council.

7. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Council's performance against the targets within the Corporate Plan – "Growing Success" has been reviewed by the Panel.

The Panel has been pleased to note that most of the targets were being met or exceeded. However the Panel had observed a failure to

achieve the target relating to the objective of ensuring that the Council is an employer that people wish to work for. As the measure of satisfaction was derived from a staff survey, the Panel has asked for further details of the analysis of the staff response to ascertain whether there are any particular reasons that can be identified for the failure to meet the target and whether any measures have been or need to be introduced to address this issue.

8. WORKPLAN STUDIES

The Panel has been advised of progress to date on its studies into a Parish Charter for Huntingdonshire and the negotiation and expenditure of Section 106 Agreements. It is anticipated that the final report on the Parish Charter will be submitted to the July meeting of the Panel.

Further ideas for future studies will be discussed at the July meeting.

9. FORWARD PLAN

The Panel has been acquainted with details of the forward plan of forthcoming key decisions prepared by the Leader of the Council. In doing so, Members have identified a number of items for consideration at future meetings.

10. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE SUPPORT) - PROGRESS

The Panel has been apprised of progress on actions required as a result of previous decisions.

Arising from a recent countywide scrutiny conference, the Panel has asked the Head of Administration to make arrangements for a briefing session for all Members on the Cambridgeshire Local Area Agreement and its operation.

The Panel has also noted that a report outlining the comments received on the operation of the procedure for public speaking at meetings of the Development Control Panel will be considered at its July meeting.

J A Gray
Chairman