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## **Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework)**

**Report of the meeting held on 3rd June 2008**

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### **Matters for Information**

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**1. BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM PLAN (MTP) PROCESS 2009 - 2010**

The Panel has reviewed the approach, process and timing for the review and approval of the financial strategy, the 2009/10 budget and the 2010/14 Medium Term Plan (MTP). Attention has been drawn to the Council's financial performance in previous years, likely future inflation trends and Executive Councillors' role in compiling next year's budget. The Panel has been informed of the order of required additional income or reduced spending in 2009/10 and in subsequent years and of the need for ongoing efficiency savings to be identified throughout the Council. Assurances have been received from the Executive Councillor for Finance and Environment that Executive Councillors will consider all future MTP bids critically in light of the Council's current financial position.

Members' attention has also been drawn to future years' forecast variations from the current year's budget, including the reasons for the variations, and the projected income, planned use of resources and additional savings that are required in the period to 2012/13. The Panel has noted that a number of financial receipts are expected in the course of next year, which will be included in the budget. As a result of this, the Panel has noted that changes will not be needed to the Council's service plans.

Having queried the financial implications of the Council's Environment Strategy, it has been reported that provision for it has been included within the MTP for the current year and in the following two years.

Following concerns raised regarding the impact on the Council of increased fuel costs, the Panel has been advised that efforts are being made across the Council to enhance energy use efficiency. Changes in the cost of fuel will be factored into inflation calculations in September for use in future forecasting.

Members have been encouraged to forward to Officers suggestions for spending adjustments before September 2008. The Panel has recommended that the Cabinet should approve the timetable and

stages for considering amendments to service plans, the financial strategy, budget and MTP and confirm the importance of identifying efficiency savings across the Council.

## **2. HUNTINGDONSHIRE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND LOCAL ECONOMY STRATEGY**

The Panel has discussed the outcome of work to refine the outcomes and objectives contained within the Huntingdonshire Sustainable Community Strategy and to develop delivery plans for each of the strategic themes.

With regard to the strategic theme for Growth and Infrastructure and, particularly the need to improve the provision of school and health facilities, the Panel has been advised that it is intended to produce an Investment Strategy for Huntingdonshire. The Strategy will be based on evidence and will include likely costs for proposed schemes. The Panel has suggested that reference to surface drainage water should be included under Item 6 of the Plan. The Panel has been advised that communities not experiencing growth will be addressed through parish plans.

The Panel has been advised that the Council's Environment Strategy will form the basis of the Action Plan for the Environment strategic theme.

In respect of the Children and Young People's strategic theme, comment has been made on the fact that contact with some statutory organisations, such as Connexions, is not compulsory for young people. Following further comment on the importance of providing means of access for young people to facilities and services, the Panel has been advised that the Inclusive, Safe and Cohesive Communities strategic theme includes reference to community transport. Members also have been reminded that the Council has appointed Councillor Hansard as its Champion for Children and Young People. Having noted the range of work already being undertaken by the Council to incorporate children and young people's views into its policies and services, Members have been advised that, in the short term, funding for projects under this strategic theme will be available from external sources and through the Council's MTP. In the longer term, further consideration will need to be given to this matter.

In examining the Action Plan for the Inclusive, Safe and Cohesive Communities strategic theme, the Panel has discussed the potential benefits of providing advocacy services for migrant workers. Having been acquainted with the likely financial implications for the Council of this suggestion, the Panel has been reminded of a previous Scrutiny Panel recommendation that Cambridgeshire should attempt to become a targeted area for English for Speakers of Other Languages, which is being pursued via the Regional College.

As a result of a previous request the Panel has reviewed the Action Plan associated with the Local Economy Strategy for

Huntingdonshire. Members have noted that new statutory powers have become available with which to pursue the current work and that the Plan will be used to attract funding and to influence regional activities. Work with partners to deliver sub-regional and regional initiatives will directly relate to the priorities contained in the Local Economy Strategy. The Action Plan also aims to add value to a range of work currently undertaken in the District and to promote joint initiatives which will lead to sustainable growth in the local economy. The Panel has requested that pump priming for commercial sites be included in the Plan. Finally, Members have discussed the agricultural industry in the District. As it represents a small proportion of economic activity and of employment locally it has not been included as one of the sectors that the Plan intends to promote. It will, however, be promoted through the local procurement network.

The Action Plans have yet to be finalised and Members have been invited to submit comments on them for this purpose. Completed Action Plans for all the strategic themes will be presented to the Panel in September. Furthermore, the Local Strategic Partnership structure is currently under review and Members will be informed of the resulting changes at a seminar in July 2008.

S J Criswell  
Chairman