

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, 1 July 2008.

PRESENT: Councillor S J Criswell – Chairman.

Councillors J D Ablewhite, Mrs M Banerjee, Mrs K E Cooper, Mrs J A Dew, J E Garner, P Godley, P G Mitchell, J M Sadler, M F Shellens, P K Ursell and J S Watt.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors E R Butler, Mrs P A Jordan and Ms M J Thomas.

16. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 3rd June 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

17. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor S J Criswell declared a personal interest in respect of Minute No's 19 and 21 by virtue of his membership of Cambridgeshire County Council.

18. 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 of the Council for the period 1st July to 31st October 2008.

The Panel requested that an item on the Sub-Regional Housing Strategy be submitted to a future meeting prior to its consideration by the Cabinet. Additionally, Members requested that reports on the Sale of Land at Mayfield Road, Huntingdon and on Community Engagement be circulated to Panel Members for information.

Having noted that the Service Support Panel had suggested that Service Delivery Panel Members might undertake a study on affordable housing a request was made for a scoping report on this subject to be submitted to a future meeting.

19. DISABILITY ACCESS STUDY

(Mrs J Farrow, Chief Executive of Hunts Forum of Voluntary Organisations, was in attendance for this item).

The Chairman welcomed Mrs J Farrow, Chief Executive of Hunts Forum of Voluntary Organisations, who had been invited to the

meeting to discuss the study on Disability Access. Having been reminded with the aid of a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) of progress of the study to date, the Panel received a presentation by Mrs Farrow on the background to the services offered by the Hunts Forum of Voluntary Organisations, which included the Shopmobility scheme, the organisation's Disability Forum, training, local advocacy services and the contribution made to the community by the Huntingdonshire Coalition of Disabled People.

The Panel were advised that the Huntingdonshire Coalition of Disabled People offered a range of local advocacy services to its stakeholders. It also organised networking events for members and carers of disabled people, training sessions for local retailers and consultation with members. Furthermore, it acted as a general point of contact for the community.

Mrs Farrow informed the Panel that owing to a lack of resources available to it, the Huntingdonshire Coalition of Disabled People was likely to cease operating. In response to questions raised by the Chairman regarding the role of Disability Cambridgeshire and a recent government initiative to establish a countywide coalition for disabled people, Mrs Farrow expressed the view that it would be preferable to provide additional support for the existing Coalition. The Panel undertook to pursue this matter with the County Council. At the conclusion of the discussion Mrs Farrow stated that the Hunts Forum of Voluntary Organisations would be happy to act as a consultee on the Council's policy making in the future.

As the study on Disability Access was nearing completion, the Panel decided to establish a Working Group to review the findings of the study to date. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that a Working Group comprising Councillors Mrs M Banerjee, Mrs K E Cooper, S J Criswell and Mrs J A Dew be established to review the findings of the Disability Access study to date and to make recommendations for consideration by the Panel.

20. ENHANCED CLEANSING SERVICES - PROPOSALS - MARKET TOWNS

Pursuant to Minute No. 07/59, the Panel considered a report by Mr R Ward, Head of Operations (a copy of which is appended to the Minute Book), which contained details of a proposal to provide enhanced Sunday cleansing services in all the market towns in the District. Mr Ward reminded Members of the background to the study and drew the Panel's attention to the resource implications and operating costs associated with the proposal. In so doing, the Panel were advised that there was no provision in the Council's financial plan for enhanced cleansing services.

The Chairman drew Members' attention to a representation made by Holywell-cum-Needlingworth Parish Council, drawing attention to the fact that the District Council already dedicated resources to cleansing

in town centres while cleansing in villages was predominantly funded by Parish Councils and requesting a partnership approach to village cleansing services. Nevertheless, the Panel reiterated their concerns at the deterioration in cleanliness of the District's town centres on Sundays as a result of increases in Sunday trade and tourism at both a local and national level.

Councillor J M Sadler suggested that the Council might investigate the establishment of Alcohol Disorder Zones, which were a government measure designed to provide a means of redress in areas experiencing problems associated with alcohol consumption. The Panel concurred with this suggestion as a long term measure to address the problems associated with litter in towns.

Following discussion the Panel concluded that the annual cost of £52,400 represented good value for money, particularly, in light of the anticipated benefits that would be achieved. The Panel, however, expressed the view that as savings were required for the Council to meet the costs of the proposal, financial contributions should be sought from the District's Town Councils. Members commented that Sunday cleansing would be more feasible if this approach was adopted and that there would be a greater likelihood that a service might be introduced if such contributions were forthcoming. In recognising the financial constraints already placed upon the Council, the Panel therefore

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be recommended to

- (a) introduce cleansing services on Sundays in all the market towns across the District as set out in the report now submitted;
- (b) seek financial contributions from Town Councils towards the cost of implementing the proposal;
- (c) subject to the outcome of (b) above, include a bid for funding for the proposal in the Medium Term Plan; and
- (d) investigate the introduction of Alcohol Disorder Zones in the District in the long term.

21. SCOPING REPORT: BACKGROUND ON WORK OF HUNTINGDONSHIRE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

(Councillor L M Simpson, Executive Councillor for Customer Services and Information Technology, was in attendance for this item on behalf of Councillor Mrs D C Reynolds, Executive Councillor for Housing and Public Health).

With the assistance of a report by the Head of Environmental and Community Health Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel were acquainted with the background to the Huntingdonshire Community Safety Partnership, together with the scope of its work.

In introducing the report, the Executive Councillor for Customer Services and Information Technology reported that the Partnership had been established in response to a requirement of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, and aimed to reduce crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour in the District. The Partnership had a number of strategic links to both County and District-wide groups such as the Cambridgeshire Strategic Community Safety Partnership and Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership.

In response to a question by a Member regarding the structure of the Partnership, the Head of Environmental and Community Health Services reported that in conjunction with the Neighbourhood Management Boards that had recently been established, problem solving groups and action groups also now were in existence. In acknowledging the complexity of the way the Partnership operated, the Head of Environmental and Community Health Services undertook to circulate to Members a chart illustrating the Partnership's structure.

Other matters that were discussed included Town and Parish Council representation at Neighbourhood Management Boards, the formulation and agreement of Local Area Agreement targets and the publication of crime statistics. With regard to the latter, Members commented that despite positive crime trends there remained public concerns over crime. In response, the Head of Environmental and Community Health Services reported that the Criminal Justice Board was in the process of devising a communication strategy, which would address this concern.

Having expressed their satisfaction that appropriate monitoring and accountability mechanisms were in place via the Strategic Partnership, the Panel concluded that it would not be necessary to conduct a study on the Community Safety Partnership.

RESOLVED

that the content of the report be noted.

22. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE DELIVERY) - STUDIES

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.

Further to Minute No.08/14, the Panel received a brief update from Councillor P G Mitchell on a meeting on the Great Fen Project that had been held on the 6th June 2008. Having noted that concerns had been raised over the loss of high quality agricultural land, the Panel were advised that a further meeting was planned for 9th July 2008 involving the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport and local farmers affected by the Project. The Chairman reported that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) would be undertaking a study on this subject and had invited Members of the Service Delivery Panel to contribute to the study. In that light, Councillors E R Butler, P G Mitchell and J S Watt expressed

interests in participating in the study. Finally, comment was made on the need to review the original project proposal and compare it with what was currently being proposed.

With regard to the impact of the new A14 in terms of air quality and noise pollution, the Central Services Manager reported that extensive work already had been completed in these areas. Councillor M F Shellens undertook to review this work and to report back at the September Panel meeting on whether a study should be undertaken.

The Chairman reported that following a meeting of the Joint Chairmen, it had been decided to realign Executive Councillors' responsibilities between the two Panels as follows:-

Service Delivery

Councillor D B Dew
Councillor C R Hyams
Councillor Mrs D C Reynolds
Councillor L M Simpson

Service Support

Councillor P L E Bucknell
Councillor K J Churchill
Councillor A Hansard
Councillor T V Rogers

The Panel were advised that the changes would be introduced informally with effect from 1st September 2008, with the situation being formalised when the Constitution was next revised.

23. SCRUTINY

In scrutinising the 85th Edition of the Digest of Decisions taken by the Cabinet and other Panels etc, Councillor P G Mitchell questioned when the county-wide forum to lobby government to investigate the problem of Heavy Goods Vehicle Parking throughout the District would be established. Information on this matter would be circulated separately to Panel Members.

Chairman