
Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery)

**Report of the meetings held on 1st July and
2nd September 2008**

Matters for Information

7. DISABILITY ACCESS STUDY

In pursuit of the Panel's current study on Disability Access in and around the District, the Panel has received a presentation by the Chief Executive of the Hunts Forum of Voluntary Organisations on the background to the services it offers, which include the Shopmobility scheme, a Disability Forum, training and local advocacy services. She also outlined the contribution made to the community by the Huntingdonshire Coalition of Disabled People.

The Panel has noted that owing to a lack of available resources, the Huntingdonshire Coalition of Disabled People is likely to cease operating in the near future. Following questions regarding the role of Disability Cambridgeshire and a recent Government initiative to establish a county-wide coalition for disabled people, the Chief Executive for the Hunts Forum of Voluntary Organisations has expressed the view that it would be preferable to provide additional support for the existing Coalition rather than create another organisation. The Panel will, therefore, suggest to the County Council that it should ensure that existing bodies are taken into account when it plans how to meet this new duty.

As the study is nearing completion, a Working Group comprising Councillors Mrs M Banerjee, Mrs K E Cooper, S J Criswell and Mrs J A Dew has been established to review the findings to date and to make recommendations for consideration by the Panel.

8. ENHANCED CLEANSING SERVICES – PROPOSALS - MARKET TOWNS

Pursuant to Item No. 22 of their Report to the meeting of the Council held on 20th February 2008, the Panel has decided to submit to the Cabinet a proposal to provide enhanced Sunday cleansing services in all the market towns in the District. The resource implications and associated operating costs are included in the proposal.

The Panel is mindful of the fact that there is no provision in the Council's financial plan for enhanced cleansing services but Members have concluded that the annual cost of the proposal of £52,400

represents good value for money. In the circumstances it has been suggested that for the Council to meet the costs of the proposal, financial contributions should be sought from the District's Town Councils.

The Panel has taken into account representations made by Holywell-cum-Needlingworth Parish Council, drawing attention to the fact that the District Council dedicates resources to cleansing in town centres whilst cleansing in villages is predominantly funded by Parish Councils. Nevertheless, Members have reiterated their concerns at the deterioration in cleanliness of the District's town centres on Sundays as a result of the night time economy, particularly given increases in Sunday trade and tourism.

A suggestion has been made that the Council might investigate the establishment of an Alcohol Disorder Zone, which is a Government measure designed to provide a means of redress in areas experiencing problems associated with alcohol consumption. The Panel has referred this suggestion to the Cabinet as a long term measure to address problems associated with litter in towns.

9. HUNTINGDONSHIRE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

The Panel has been acquainted with the background to the Huntingdonshire Community Safety Partnership and the scope of its work. The Partnership was established in response to a requirement of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, and aims to reduce crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour within the District. The Partnership has established a number of strategic links to both County and District-wide groups. The Panel has acknowledged the complexity of the way in which the Partnership operates. In order to clarify matters, a chart illustrating the Partnership's structure is to be circulated to Panel Members.

Members have discussed Town and Parish Council representation at Neighbourhood Management Boards, the formulation and agreement of Local Area Agreement targets and the publication of crime statistics. Furthermore, the Panel has expressed their satisfaction that the Panel has appropriate monitoring and accountability mechanisms in place. Members have concluded that it is not necessary to conduct a study on the Partnership.

10. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS TO ST IVES TOWN CENTRE

The Panel has considered a range of options for Phase 2 environmental improvements to the Market Hill and Bridge Street areas of St. Ives. The options have been scrutinised by an Advisory Group comprising County, District and Town Councillors together with Panel representatives and representatives from local consultative groups such as the Town Partnership, the Access Group and the Civic Society. The options will now be subject to public consultation. The Panel has been reminded that its role is to ensure that the Environmental Improvements Protocol has been adhered to.

The Panel has expressed the view that extensive publicity should be undertaken during the consultation process. In addition, a number of methods of engaging with the public will be employed. Following discussions on bus services operating within the town centre, the Panel has been advised that access for buses will not be affected by any of the options.

The Panel has concluded that the Environmental Improvements Protocol previously approved by the Cabinet has been adhered to. Members have, therefore, recommended the Cabinet to approve the principle of the scheme and to take the necessary public consultation to identify the preferred option.

**11. CUSTOMER SERVICE QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT:
APRIL – JUNE 2008**

The Panel has received the Customer Service Quarterly Performance Report for the period April to June 2008. By way of background, the Panel has been advised that following the formation of a new Customer Services Team in February 2008, quarterly performance reports are now produced, which covers all services within the Team.

Having noted the performance reported and following clarification of the scope of a number of activities referred to, the Panel has requested that additional information on the number of unanswered phone calls received by the Call Centre and of enquiries in areas that are not the responsibility of the District Council be incorporated into future performance reports.

**12. ADOPTION OF LOCAL STANDARDS FOR THE PROVISION OF
CORE SPORTS FACILITIES IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE**

The Panel has been acquainted with a proposal to adopt local standards for the provision of core sports facilities in Huntingdonshire. The standards will help to achieve an appropriate range of sports facilities to meet future need. The proposal is particularly timely in the context of the preparations for the forthcoming Olympics. Members have been assured that the adoption of the standards will not result in the creation of new facilities that will compete with existing Council facilities.

The Panel has been informed that whilst the proposal is for five specified types of sports facilities, an emerging Leisure Facilities Strategy will incorporate other facilities. In recognising that it is being encouraged by Sport England, the Panel has recommended the Cabinet to approve the adoption of local standards for the provision of core sports facilities within Huntingdonshire on the understanding that the Council will not be responsible for future operating and maintenance costs of new facilities.

13. CHEWING GUM LITTER REDUCTION TRIAL

The Panel has reviewed the outcome of the chewing gum litter reduction trial and has considered a proposal to extend the scheme to St Neots. Having noted that the Council spends £17,000 per year

removing chewing gum from pavements in town centres, questions have been raised regarding the level of savings achieved since the scheme was introduced. As the scheme was still in its early stages, the level of savings achieved was not yet been identified. Nevertheless, owing to the success of the trial to date, the Panel has endorsed the decision to extend the scheme and has requested that parish councils are provided with details of it in order that they may introduce their own schemes.

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

The Panel has reviewed its programme of studies at each of its meetings. In discussing the Great Fen Project concerns have been raised over the fact that it will result in the agricultural industry's loss of high quality land. In noting that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) will be undertaking a study on the Project, Councillors E R Butler, P G Mitchell and J S Watt have expressed interests in participating in the study. Other Members of the Panel have been invited to attend a presentation at the November meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) on the Project.

In addition, the need to pursue a study on the impact of the new A14 in terms of air quality and noise pollution is being investigated and the Panel has requested that a scoping report on affordable housing is submitted to a future meeting.

Other Matters of Interest

15. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 - FORWARD PLAN

The Panel has been acquainted with details of the relevant Forward Plan of Key Decisions and has requested sight of the Sub-Regional Housing Strategy at a future meeting. Members also have requested and received background information relating to items on Customer Service Development in St Ives and St Neots and Land at Mayfield Road, Huntingdon.

16. SCRUTINY

The Panel has considered the latest editions of the Decision Digest and received answers to Members' queries on matters contained therein.

S J Criswell
Chairman