

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (CORPORATE AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK) held in the Council Chamber, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 2nd September 2008.

PRESENT: Councillor S J Criswell – Chairman.

Councillors M G Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, P J Downes, J E Garner, P M D Godfrey, J A Gray, M F Newman, M F Shellens and R J West.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors E R Butler, D Harty, L W McGuire, P G Mitchell and P K Ursell.

5. 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.

6. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

7. GROWING SUCCESS - CORPORATE PLAN

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Policy and Strategic Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the outcome of the annual review of the Council's Corporate Plan prior to its consideration by the Cabinet and Council. Having been advised that the document contained fewer priorities than the previous version and that it would be used to inform the Council's financial planning, the Panel discussed each of the objectives contained in the Plan.

Having noted the work undertaken by the Corporate Plan Working Group in the course of the review, the Panel discussed a range of matters associated with the Plan, which included its provisions in relation to climate change and public transport in rural areas. In so doing, emphasis was placed on the fact that the Plan only referred to matters that fell within the Council's remit. With regard to the Council's approach to affordable housing, concern was expressed at the likelihood that the targets specified could be achieved in the current housing market. In response, Members were assured that the Council's partnership working in this area would continue and that the Chief Officers Management Team would be considering recent Government announcements on this subject.

Following a suggestion by a Member, the Panel decided to extend the Corporate Plan Working Group's remit by requesting the Group to investigate the cost implications of each priority area identified within

the Plan. Having been advised that information relating to the Council's performance against the Plan would continue to be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels on a quarterly basis, the Panel

RESOLVED

that the Corporate Plan - Growing Success be endorsed for submission to the Cabinet and Council.

8. FINANCIAL FORECAST

(Councillor T V Rogers, Executive Councillor for Finance and Environment, was in attendance for this item).

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Financial Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the Council's present position in relation to the Council's financial forecast for the period to 2018/19. Members were acquainted with potential variations in a number of sources of income and other factors that would affect the Council's financial position and the likely effects on levels of reserves and of Council Tax.

In the ensuing discussion the Panel acknowledged the uncertainty created by inflation in the current economic climate. In response to a question by a Member on this subject, the Panel was informed of the potential effects on reserves for the Council of maintaining current service levels should high levels of inflation continue. Following a further question on the implications of increases in the cost of fuel with particular reference to the waste collection service, it was reported that the Council's options were being investigated as part of an ongoing review of Council travel.

With regard to the proposed spending plan for the period to 2018/19, the Panel has stressed the importance for the Council of identifying the necessary spending adjustments, especially in the medium term. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the report now submitted be endorsed for submission to the Cabinet and Council.

9. CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

(Councillor L M Simpson, Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Councillor for Customer Services and Information Technology was in attendance for consideration of this item)

Further to Minute No. 07/24, and with the aid of a report by the Head of Customer Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel were acquainted with the contents of the Customer Service Strategy Action Plan. The Action Plan had been developed following the adoption by the Council of the Customer Service Strategy.

Having received clarification on a number of items contained within

the Plan and an outline of future plans to develop the way the Council delivered its services to the public, the Panel

RESOLVED

that the Customer Service Strategy Action Plan be endorsed for submission to the Cabinet.

Chairman