

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE SUPPORT) held in the Council Chamber, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 9 December 2008.

- PRESENT: Councillor J A Gray – Chairman.
- Councillors M G Baker, J T Bell, P H Dakers, J W Davies, P J Downes, A N Gilbert, P M D Godfrey, D Harty, L W McGuire, M F Newman, R G Tuplin and R J West.
- APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors K M Baker and Ms S Kemp.
- IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor P L E Bucknell

Prior to the arrival of the Chairman, the Vice Chairman took the Chair.

Councillor P M D Godfrey, Vice Chairman in the Chair.

56. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 11th November 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

57. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

58. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 - FORWARD PLAN

The Panel considered and noted the current Forward Plan of key decisions (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) scheduled for consideration by the Cabinet, which had been prepared by the Leader of the Council. In doing so, Members were advised that the options review for Building A of the District Council's Headquarters would be considered by the Corporate & Strategic Framework Panel at its meeting in January 2009.

Councillor J A Gray in the Chair.

59. DEVELOPMENT OF OPTIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT DPD

(Councillor P L E Bucknell, Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy & Transportation was in attendance for this item).

With the assistance of a report by the Head of Planning Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel considered the draft document which set out the Council's detailed policies for managing future development in Huntingdonshire

The Panel was informed that the policies were designed to complement the strategic framework established in the Core Strategy and reflected the representations received during the Issues and Options consultation and the Initial Sustainability Appraisal. Attention was drawn to the key sections within the document and the recent amendments made by the Development Plan Advisory Group following its consideration of the report. In particular Members were informed that because of a delay in the preparation of the Great Fen Master Plan, the references within the document to the Master Plan would be changed to reflect the fact that this had yet to be completed.

In considering each of the proposed policies, Members commented upon a variety of issues including parking provision in new development, the implications of the new Community Infrastructure Levy, the retention of historic orchards and energy conservation measures in new development. Specific questions also were raised in relation to the definition of key service centres, cycleway development and building in the flood plain. Members also noted that a framework had now been developed for the first time to establish contributions from developers towards indoor sports facilities.

In respect of the draft policy concerning development as part of the Great Fen Project, Members expressed concern that the policy could be construed as being overly prescriptive and not consistent with the more conditional language adopted elsewhere in the document. Members felt that the terminology used whereby "planning permission for development..... will be granted for proposals which will deliver the implementation of the Great Fen Project as identified on the Proposals Map and which are consistent with the Master Plan" could fetter the Council's discretion when considering future applications. Particularly as the content of the Master Plan was not yet known, Members felt unable to support the policy as drafted. Concerns were also expressed about the references in paragraph 4.31 to the possible restriction of permitted development rights for specific farming or operational purposes which could disadvantage local landowners operating in the Master Plan area.

Having noted that the report would be considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 18th December 2008 and that further public engagement would take place with effect from January 2009, the Panel

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be recommended to change the words "will be granted" to "may be granted" in the first line of the policy relating to the Great Fen Project.

60. URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK - LAND AROUND BUTTSGROVE WAY, THE WHADDONS AND SUFFOLK HOUSE, HUNTINGDON

(Councillor P L E Bucknell, Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy was in attendance for this item).

With the assistance of a report by the Head of Planning Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel considered the content of an Urban Design Framework (UDF) for development opportunities in this part of Huntingdon. A copy of the responses received from the recent consultation exercise also was tabled for information.

Having been acquainted with the background to the creation of the UDF, Members were advised that it was intended to establish a clear planning framework to ensure that future proposals for development within the area were well planned and appropriate. The owners of some of the existing property had already indicated their intention to redevelop the area and the Panel was informed that the UDF would assist in the formulation of the design of the new development proposals.

Members attention was drawn to the comments that had been received by way of correspondence and questionnaires completed at public exhibitions that had been held into the proposals. A formal response from the Town Council was awaited. It was noted by Members that a number of replies had contained concerns over loss of green space in the area.

In welcoming the document as a positive step and one which had helped to alleviate initial misunderstandings amongst local residents. Members commented also on the question of highway safety in Buttsgrove Way, the future housing mix of development and the need to respect the private dwellings in the area in the subsequent development proposals.

RESOLVED

that the contents of the Urban Design Framework be endorsed.

61. MONITORING OF SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS (PLANNING OBLIGATIONS)

With the assistance of a report by the Head of Policy and Strategic Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel was updated on the receipt and expenditure of money negotiated under Section 106 Agreements by the Council.

In doing so, the Panel noted that there had been a slow down in money received from developers because of the current economic climate. Members also were alerted to the future possibility of developers seeking to renegotiate agreements because properties were no longer achieving previously anticipated values.

Having agreed to note the contents of the report, the Chairman suggested that if there were any specific queries that Members wish to raise these should be directed in the first instance to the Head of Administration or the Democratic Services Section.

62. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

With the assistance of a report by the Head of Policy and Strategic Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Panel considered the performance of the authority against the priority objectives identified in "Growing Success", the corporate plan updated by the Council in September 2008.

Having noted that most of the targets within the priority areas allocated to the Service Support Panel were being met or exceeded, comment was made in relation to the target of maximising leisure centre income. While this had fallen against target, Members acknowledged that the loss of income had been more than offset by reductions in expenditure in the Leisure Centres as a whole.

63. WORKPLAN STUDIES

The Panel considered and noted a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) reviewing the Panel's programme of studies. In doing so, Councillors Harty, Godfrey and McGuire reported on the investigations being undertaken by the working groups reviewing the Section 106 process, the social consequences of alcohol abuse and maximising Council income respectively. Members were advised that the first two of the groups were in the process of compiling their final reports.

64. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE SUPPORT)

The Panel considered and noted a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) reviewing the Panel's progress to date on issues that had been discussed previously.

Councillor J W Davies reported that the problems with flooding from the foul sewerage system in St Audrey Lane appeared to have improved following the jetting of the surface water drain. However, he urged the Panel to continue to pursue with Anglian Water issues relating to the capacity of the pumping station at Broadleas and it was agreed that a further update would be sought in February / March 2009.

The Chairman announced that First Capital Connect would be attending the Panel's January meeting to discuss their expansion plans for the car parks at Huntingdon and St Neots, It was suggested that it might be appropriate to issue a press release to this effect.

The Head of Administration reported on discussions held recently about proposed arrangements for scrutiny of the Local Area Agreement and the role of the Joint Accountability Committee. The

Panel were also advised that proposals to undertake a review of affordable housing had been postponed pending the examination in public of the Council's Core Strategy.

65. SCRUTINY

The Panel considered and noted the latest edition of the Council's Decision Digest, summarising the Council's decisions since the previous meeting. In so doing, a number of questions were answered to the Panel's satisfaction by the Head of Administration.

Chairman