
Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Service Support)

**Report of the meetings held on 9th December 2008
and 13th January 2009**

Matters for Information

**29. DEVELOPMENT OF OPTIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT
MANAGEMENT DPD**

The Panel has considered the content of the Development Management DPD which sets out the Council's policies for managing future development in Huntingdonshire.

In so doing, the Panel has commented upon a variety of issues including parking provision and energy conservation in new development, the implications of the new Community Infrastructure Levy, cycleway development and building in the flood plain. Members also have noted that a framework has been developed for the first time to establish contributions from developers towards indoor sports facilities.

Although the Panel has expressed general support for the proposed policies within the document, some concerns were expressed in relation to the wording of the draft policy concerning development as part of the Great Fen Project such that Members felt unable to support the policy as drafted. Given that the contents of a Master Plan for the area is not yet available, 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. Concerns were also expressed about the references 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.

The Panel's comments were conveyed to the Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 18th December 2008. Item No. 62 of the Report to the Cabinet refers.

**30. URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK –
LAND AROUND BUTTSGROVE WAY, THE WHADDONS AND
SUFFOLK HOUSE, HUNTINGDON**

The Panel has endorsed the content of an Urban Design Framework (UDF) for development opportunities in this part of Huntingdon which had been designed to establish a clear planning framework to ensure that future proposals for development within the area are well planned and appropriate. In so doing, Members' attention was drawn to the responses which had been received from a recent consultation exercise.

In welcoming the document as a positive step and one which had helped to alleviate initial misunderstandings amongst local residents, Members expressed comments 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 substantial development proposals.

**31. CAR PARKING DEVELOPMENT AT HUNTINGDON AND
ST NEOTS RAILWAY STATIONS**

The District Council's Transportation Team Leader attended the Panel's January meeting to update Members with ongoing discussions between the Local Planning Authority and Network Rail concerning the expansion of the car parking facilities at St Neots and Huntingdon Railway Stations. Members have been acquainted with the background to the discussions and advised that, arising from the expansion proposals the District Council had concerns about vehicular access to St Neots Station and the Western Car Park in Huntingdon. A resolution to the question as to whether the proposals constituted permitted development was still awaited.

In discussing the current situation, Members have commented that any changes to vehicular access to Huntingdon Station should not be considered in isolation from the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan and the parking capacity problems experienced by off-peak travellers in the town. The Panel also queried the District Council's position and the implications for access if the situation was not resolved or the expansion proposal was deemed to be permitted development.

The Panel also discussed the connections between train and bus services operating from the Huntingdon and St Neots Stations. Problems in this respect were particularly highlighted in St Neots and the Panel has been informed that Stagecoach has already been advised and that, Councillor P L E Bucknell, as Executive Councillor would be meeting with bus companies to discuss the matter in the near future.

32. SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF ALCOHOL ABUSE

The Panel has received the final report of its Working Group which was established to consider the problems of alcohol abuse and its social consequences within the District. Subject to an amendment to

emphasise the importance of enforcement agencies making full use of the powers available to them to tackle the effects of alcohol misuse and resultant public disorder, the Panel has endorsed the content of the report.

The Panel has also agreed to re-visit the study towards the end of the year to review progress made towards achievement of the countywide alcohol action plan, the night watch project in St Ives and the availability of statistics from Hinchingsbrooke Hospital on alcohol related accidents and emergency treatment.

The Panel's report has subsequently been considered by the Cabinet, (Item No.71 of its Report refers).

33. MONITORING OF SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS (PLANNING OBLIGATIONS)

The Panel has been updated on the receipt and expenditure of money negotiated under Section 106 Agreements by the Council.

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

34. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Council's performance against the targets within the Corporate Plan "Growing Success" has been reviewed by the Panel.

The Panel has been pleased to note that most of the targets within the priority areas allocated to the Service Support Panel were being met or exceeded.

35. FORWARD PLAN

The Panel has been acquainted with details of the Forward Plan of forthcoming key decisions prepared by the Leader of the Council, arising from which Members have identified a number of items for consideration at future meetings or on which further information was requested.

36. WORK PLAN STUDIES

The Panel has been advised of progress made to date on its studies into the negotiation and expenditure of Section 106 Agreements and maximising Council income.

Although the Panel may give consideration to the Council's future borrowing requirements as a potential area for future investigation, Members have agreed that in the light of the ongoing review of the Council's political management structure and the potential changes to Overview and Scrutiny arrangements, it would not be appropriate to

start any fresh studies before the commencement of the new Municipal Year.

37. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE SUPPORT) - PROGRESS

The Panel has been advised of progress on actions required as a result of recent decisions, as part of which further information has been requested on the future situation with regard to heavy goods vehicle parking at Alconbury and the deliberations of a three County group which has been established to pool information and develop a Heavy Commercial Vehicle Strategy.

38. SCRUTINY

The Panel has considered the latest editions of the Decision Digest and discussed matters contained therein.

In so doing, the Panel has endorsed the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) concerning customer service development in St. Ives and St. Neots. These related to the need to consult Ward Councillors on any proposals to change the location of existing Customer Service Centres and a suggestion to investigate the provision of outreach services in larger villages.

J A Gray
Chairman