

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE DELIVERY) held in the Wren Room, Countryside Centre, Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, Brampton Road, Huntingdon, PE29 6DB on Tuesday, 3 March 2009.

PRESENT: Councillor S J Criswell – Chairman.

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

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs J A Dew, J M Sadler, Ms M J Thomas and J S Watt.

84. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 3rd March 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

85. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor S J Criswell declared a personal interest in Minute No. 87 by virtue of his membership of Somersham Parish Council.

Councillor M F Shellens declared a personal interest in Minute No. 87 as Chairman of Brampton Parish Council.

Councillor P K Ursell declared a personal interest in Minute No. 87 by virtue of his membership of St Neots Town Council.

Councillor Mrs M Banerjee declared a personal interest in Minute No. 91 by virtue of her membership of the Board of Directors of Luminus.

86. 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 March to 30th June 2009. In so doing, the Panel were advised that items on the Older Persons Housing Strategy Update, Lettings Policy Review, Leisure Facilities Strategy and St Ives Environmental Improvements would be submitted to the Panel's April meeting. In addition, it was reported that all Members of the Council had received a copy of the report on Capital Grant Aid Awards.

87. PROVISION OF LEISURE FACILITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Pursuant to Minute No. 08/62, the Panel received a report by the Head of Operations (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book)

containing information on the leisure facilities owned and maintained by the District Council or where the Council had an involvement in their maintenance. Having drawn the Panel's attention to the report's Appendix, Mr J Craig, the Service Development Manager, reported that the information presented excluded those facilities under the direct control of the District's Town and Parish Councils.

Having drawn attention to the efforts of independent community groups in raising funds for youth facilities within villages, Councillor P G Mitchell expressed the view that support should be provided by the District Council to assist the groups with the ongoing revenue costs associated with such facilities. In response, Mr Craig stressed the importance of budgeting for revenue costs when planning for new facilities.

In discussing the provision of funding through Section 106 agreements for the construction and maintenance of facilities, Members drew attention to the resulting difference between towns and villages in the availability of facilities. The view was expressed that there should be more consistency in the provision of youth facilities across the District. It was, therefore, agreed to establish a Working Group to meet with the Executive Councillor for Operational and Countryside Services to discuss the matter further. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the report now submitted be noted; and
- (b) that a Working Group be established comprising Councillors J D Ablewhite and P G Mitchell to investigate the provision of leisure facilities, with a view to making recommendations on achieving an even distribution of youth facilities across the District and on meeting the ongoing revenue costs associated with such facilities.

88. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Panel considered a report by the Head of Policy and Strategic Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) containing details of the Council's performance against its priority objectives in the quarter to 31st December 2008.

Having endorsed the comments made by the Corporate Plan Working Group (a copy of which is also appended in the Minute Book) Members confirmed the Working Group's request for a report on the private housing retrofit project to be submitted to the Panel's June meeting. In addition, it was suggested that a representative of the Carbon Trust should be invited to attend a subsequent meeting, with a view to examining the retrofit project's principles in the context of the Trust's work. It was further suggested that environmental efficiency data should be compiled in order to determine the energy efficiency levels of the homes before and after completion of the refurbishment works. It was anticipated that the availability of such data would encourage residents and developers to adopt energy efficiency measures.

Members concurred with the Corporate Plan Working Group's recommendation that promotion of the disabled facilities available at Sawtry Leisure Centre should be undertaken.

In terms of the key measure relating to the number of households living in temporary accommodation, the Panel noted that the quarterly target had been exceeded. However, it was reported that the performance achieved represented an increase in the number of households prevented from becoming homeless during the reporting period. In that context, Members were reminded of the measures that had been put in place to tackle homelessness within the District.

Finally, the Panel reiterated their concern at the issue raised in the previous quarter's monitoring report regarding a potential risk should the bid for funding to re-model Coneygear Court not be successful. Having expressed overall satisfaction with the levels of performance achieved in the year to date, the Panel

RESOLVED

- (a) that the report be endorsed for submission to the Cabinet; and
- (b) that the Cabinet be formally notified of the Panel's views on the contents of the report by the Head of Policy and Strategic Services.

89. ADOPTION OF ROADS AND SEWERS

Pursuant to Minute No. 08/80, the Panel received and noted a report by the Adoption of Roads and Sewers Working Group (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which provided a further update on the investigations by the Working Group. The District Council's Head of Legal and Estates had advised the Working Group that, in his opinion, there were adequate legal provisions in existence to ensure that the adoption of roads and sewers could be brought to completion. Furthermore, Members were advised that the Head of Legal and Estates had made enquiries with local Solicitors on conveyancing practices and, as a result, had established that during the purchasing process, purchasers and mortgage providers were made fully aware of the status of the roads and sewers servicing properties and of the associated financial liabilities should either not have been adopted. A suggestion was endorsed that the Working Group should undertake further work intended to ensure that all solicitors operated to this standard.

Following further discussion, the Panel concluded that new legislation to be introduced by the Government in 2010/11 would ensure that sewers were adopted and that this would expedite the adoption of roads.

90. 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. Updates were received on developments relating to the Panel's final report on grant aid and on the future governance of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital. With regard to the latter, the Panel were advised that the Department of Health had approved the Strategic Health Authority's proposal but that formal approval had yet to be obtained from Her Majesty's Treasury.

91. SCRUTINY

In scrutinising the 92nd Edition of the digest of decisions taken by the Cabinet and other Panels etc, Members raised the following queries:-

Review of Central Services Directorate – in response to a question by Councillor J E Garner, the Panel were advised that the review would result in savings of £273,000 being achieved over the next three years.

New Accommodation – Building A – Options Review – Councillor M F Shellens questioned whether a Section 106 agreement would be sought in relation to the proposals for the site. Clarification of this matter would be circulated electronically to Members.

Chairman