
Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery)

**Reports of the meetings held on 3rd March and
7th April 2009**

Matters for Information

45. PROVISION OF LEISURE FACILITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The Panel has received information on the leisure facilities owned and maintained by the District Council, together with details of facilities in which the Council has an involvement in their maintenance. The information presented excludes those facilities under the sole control of the District's Town and Parish Councils.

The Panel has discussed the achievements of independent community groups in raising funds for youth facilities within villages. Members also have discussed the provision of funding through Section 106 agreements for the construction and maintenance of facilities and the difference this has made to the availability of facilities in towns and villages. The Panel has expressed the view that there should be greater consistency in the provision of facilities across the District. A Working Group has been appointed, comprising Councillors J D Ablewhite and P G Mitchell, to meet with the Executive Councillor for Operational and Countryside Services to discuss the matter further and to make recommendations with a view to achieving an even distribution of youth facilities across the District and on how the ongoing revenue costs associated with such facilities might be met.

46. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

In conjunction with the Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support), the Panel for Service Delivery has reviewed the Council's performance against its priority objectives, which are contained in "Growing Success" - the Corporate Plan. In endorsing the views of the Corporate Plan Working Group, the Panel has confirmed the Working Group's request for a report on the private housing retrofit project to be submitted to the Panel's June meeting. Members also have requested that a representative of the Carbon Trust is invited to a subsequent meeting of the Panel, to enable Members to examine the retrofit project's principles in the context of the Trust's work. It has further been suggested that environmental efficiency data should be compiled in order to determine energy

efficiency levels of the homes before and after the completion of refurbishment works.

The Panel has concurred with Corporate Plan Working Group's suggestion that, because of the low levels of use being made of them, promotion of the disabled facilities available at Sawtry Leisure Centre should be undertaken.

Having queried the data relating to the key measure for the number of households living in temporary accommodation, it has been reported that whilst the performance achieved does not meet the target, it represents an increase in the number of households that have been prevented from becoming homeless during the reporting period.

Finally, the Panel has reiterated their previous concern that it might not be possible to complete the scheme to re-model Coneygear Court should a bid for funding be unsuccessful.

47. ADOPTION OF ROADS AND SEWERS

Pursuant to Item No. 41 of their Report to the meeting of the Council held on 18th February 2009, the Panel has received a further update on the investigations being undertaken by the Adoption of Roads and Sewers Working Group. The Head of Legal and Estates has informed the Working Group that there are adequate legal provisions in existence to ensure that the adoption of roads can be brought to completion. In addition, the Head of Legal and Estates has made enquiries with local Solicitors on conveyancing practice and it has been established that during the purchasing process, purchasers and mortgage providers are made fully aware of the status of the roads and sewers servicing properties and of their associated liabilities should either not be adopted.

The Panel has concluded that new legislation to be introduced by the Government in 2010/11 will ensure that sewers are adopted and that this will, in turn, expedite the road adoption process.

48. REVIEW OF THE HOME-LINK SCHEME AND THE COUNCIL'S LETTINGS POLICY

The outcome of a review of Home-Link, the choice based lettings scheme, has been considered by the Panel. The review examined strategic and operational aspects of the scheme and involved consultation with housing association partners, statutory and voluntary agencies and customers of the scheme. Whilst Members were encouraged by the reported level of users' satisfaction with the scheme, the review has revealed that some customers have difficulty in understanding the mechanics of the scheme and that some users require assistance to bid for properties. As a result continued efforts will be made to inform potential users and raise awareness generally of the support that is available to them, particularly for those on the Housing Register.

In terms of the Council's Lettings Policy, the Panel has noted the review conclusion that the current policy is adequate to meet local need and that only a minor amendment is required. The Panel has discussed the implications of re-prioritising homeless persons by awarding them a Band B priority and consequently has expressed support for this change.

49. SPORTS FACILITIES STRATEGY

The Panel has been acquainted with a proposal to adopt a Sports Facilities Strategy for Huntingdonshire. The Strategy will help to achieve an adequate range of sports facilities to meet future need taking into account population growth anticipated within the District in future years. The Building Schools for the Future Programme will be an important factor in achieving an increased level of provision of sports facilities.

In preparing the Strategy, an attempt has been made to identify all sports facilities available across Huntingdonshire, inclusive of those facilities owned by the private, voluntary and education sectors. This data has been compared with national recommended levels of provision for a given level of population and the outcome will be used to inform the future provision of sports facilities within the District. The Panel has recommended the Cabinet to adopt the Sports Facilities Strategy for Huntingdonshire on the understanding that the Council will not be solely responsible for being the provider of such facilities.

50. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS TO ST IVES TOWN CENTRE

The Panel has been acquainted with the outcome of a consultation exercise undertaken by the Council as part of the second phase of environmental improvements to the Market Hill and Bridge Street areas of St Ives. The Panel has been reminded that its role is to ensure that the Environmental Improvements Protocol has been adhered to in advance of any works being carried out.

The consultation reveals that there is no clear majority amongst respondents for any of the three options presented for consultation. The Advisory Group, which comprises County, District and Town Councillors together with Panel representatives and representatives from local groups such as the Town Partnership, the Access Group and the Civic Society has scrutinised the results of the consultation and has suggested that as no consensus for any of the options has been gained, the scheme should be deferred from its planned start date of January 2010 to enable a review of the options to take place. The deferment would also be timely given the current economic climate and the impact that works would have on local retailers within the town. In addition, works might adversely affect planned celebrations of the Town's 800th anniversary.

The Panel has expressed their satisfaction that the Environmental Improvements Protocol has been adhered to. Members have also considered the options available to the Council with regard to this

matter and have suggested to the Cabinet that deferral is the preferred course but that the situation should be reviewed in 12 months. This will allow time for the formulation of a scheme which more adequately suits the requirements of the Town. Additionally, the Panel has suggested that financial contributions towards the cost of the scheme should be sought from the County and Town Councils.

51. RECYCLING

The Panel has been updated with the outcome of recent negotiations on the contract for the processing and onward sale of recyclable materials. It has been reported that, in light of recent trends within the market, the terms of the current contract in respect of gate fees has been varied. Having noted that the contract will end in November 2009, Members have been informed that a tendering process currently is being undertaken for a new contract in conjunction with Fenland District Council and Cambridge City Council.

52. REVIEW OF DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE

In conjunction with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support), the Panel for Service Delivery has discussed the findings of the Structure Review Working Group following their review of the Council's democratic structure. The comments of the Panel on each of the recommendations are incorporated within a separate report, which appears elsewhere on the Council Agenda.

53. LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH ACT 2007 – IMPLICATIONS FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

The Panel was acquainted with legislative changes affecting Overview and Scrutiny, which have arisen from the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The changes introduce a Councillor Call for Action, which enables any Member of the Council to refer to an Overview and Scrutiny Panel any local government matter relevant to the functions of the Panel. The changes require alterations to the Council Procedure Rules and the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules contained within the Constitution. The Panel has endorsed the content of a guide outlining a process for making a Councillor Call for Action.

Attention has been drawn to changes, which affect the scope of the Panels' work and the way in which Overview and Scrutiny reports and recommendations must be responded to. In addition, there now exists provision for joint Overview and Scrutiny arrangements between County and District Councils. Legislation relating to the scrutiny of crime and disorder matters is likely to come into force at the end of April 2009.

The changes will take effect from 1st April 2009. The Panel has recommended the Corporate Governance Panel to approve the constitutional changes required to bring the new powers in to force (Item No. 30 of their Report refers).

54. NHS CAMBRIDGESHIRE STRATEGIC PLAN 2009 - 2014

The Panel has received details of a consultation being undertaken by NHS Cambridgeshire on their Strategic Plan for the period 2009 – 2014. In advance of submitting a response to the consultation, the Panel has decided to meet with a representative of NHS Cambridgeshire to discuss the proposals contained within the Plan in detail. The consultation period ends on 29th May 2009.

Other Matters of Interest

55. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE DELIVERY) PROGRESS

The Panel has reviewed its programme of studies at each of its meetings. Updates have been received on the Panel's final report on grant aid and on the future governance of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital.

56. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 – FORWARD PLAN

The Panel has been acquainted with details of the current Forward Plan of Key Decisions at each of its meetings. The Panel has requested sight of items entitled St Ivo and St Neots Leisure Centres – Proposals for Development, Carbon Management Plan, Sustainable Communities Act and Leisure Centres – Performance Monitoring Report prior to their consideration by the Cabinet. Additionally, the Corporate Equality Policy Action Plan Progress report has been requested for circulation informally to Panel Members.

57. SCRUTINY

The Panel has received and noted the latest editions of the Decision Digest and has received answers to questions raised on their contents.

J Criswell
Chairman