
Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Service Support)

Report of the meeting held on 14th April 2009

Matters for Information

49. PROPOSALS FOR RIVERSIDE PARK, HUNTINGDON

Following the earlier consideration of a report on future improvements to Riverside Park, Huntingdon in February 2008, the Panel has considered the outcome of a consultation exercise on the scheme which involved a public exhibition, meetings, questionnaires and workshops with young people.

The Panel has been informed that the scheme has been modified and split into two phases to reflect the views expressed during the consultation and the Council's financial situation. Although the Panel recognises the benefits of securing improvements to the park, there is concern over the financial implications of the proposals having regard to the Council's financial position. In particular the Panel questioned the size of the provision made for planting which was thought to be excessive and whether the Council should be incurring expenditure on greening the traffic island at the Bridge Hotel when this formed part of the highway and the County Council is the responsible highway authority. The Panel also did not support a proposal for additional, ongoing revenue expenditure on improved maintenance of the wildlife area at the Park and felt that phase 2 of the scheme proposed for 2011/12 should be regarded as aspirational only.

The views of the Panel have been passed to Cabinet for its consideration, broadly welcoming the scheme but expressing concern over the financial implications.

50. MASTER PLAN FOR LAND EAST OF SAPLEY SQUARE, OXMOOR, HUNTINGDON

In December 2008, the Cabinet considered a report regarding a proposal for the Council to act as a key partner in the establishment of a Community Interests Company to deliver a community enterprise centre within the Sapley Square East development area in accordance with an emerging Master Plan for the regeneration of the Sapley East area. The Panel had

requested an opportunity to view the Master Plan before its approval by Cabinet.

The Panel has been acquainted with a report summarising the outcome of the latest public consultation on the preferred options for Sapley East and the community enterprise centre, and the Master Plan which has been produced as a consequence of that exercise. Having been informed that local residents welcome the proposals, the Panel has informed the Cabinet that it supports the proposals and the Master Plan as drafted.

51. HUNTINGDON WEST AREA ACTION PLAN

Following its consideration of the draft issues and options for the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan in April 2007, the Panel has been informed of the preferred approach for now taking forward the Plan. Subject to Cabinet approval of the draft, further consultation will take place with the public and interested parties. A final draft will then be prepared for approval by Cabinet and Council, before submission to the Secretary of State.

While welcoming the proposals for redevelopment, and regeneration of the area, the Panel is of the opinion that the Plan is overly cautious when dealing with the highway implications of the proposals. Having regard to current traffic volumes and the potential for this to increase with the removal of the viaduct at the railway station, the Panel suggests that a more aspirational approach should be taken to secure highway improvements as part of the plan.

The Panel's views have been passed to the Cabinet for their consideration.

52. REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY REVIEW – THE CAMBRIDGESHIRE DEVELOPMENT STUDY

In item 39 of its Report, the Panel reported on its consideration of the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) proposals for growth in the East of England in the period to 2031. The Panel has now been updated on the outcome of discussions by the Joint Cambridgeshire RSS Review Panel (CReSSP) at its meeting on the situation within the County.

Having considered the basis of a response to EERA by CReSSP, the Panel has concerns over the implications for Huntingdonshire, particularly the references to development on Alconbury Airfield. The Panel supports the concept of development where employment opportunities exist as opposed to past practice where development in Huntingdonshire has resulted in commuting to Cambridge and elsewhere. The Panel also considers that the proposals do not pay sufficient regard to

the recent substantial investment in public transport improvements in the County.

The Panel therefore has endorsed a recommendation proposed by the Head of Planning Services that Huntingdonshire should support the following principles when responding to the EERA proposal -

- (i) that the emerging 'Cambridgeshire Growth Strategy' is underpinned by a positive commitment to a highly sustainable approach that will both direct policy development and influence the proposed spatial pattern of development;
- (ii) that the emerging 'Cambridgeshire Growth Strategy' principally reinforces and builds upon the established subsequential approach to the direction of further growth within Cambridgeshire;
- (iii) that the emerging 'Cambridgeshire Growth Strategy' acknowledges that there is limited capacity for additional growth above the established RSS levels and therefore that any targets for growth up to 2031 must reflect the lower rather than the higher NHPAU scenarios;
- (iv) that the emerging 'Cambridgeshire Growth Strategy' acknowledges the need to utilise the capacity of, and the opportunities created by, existing and committed transport and other infrastructure provision;
- (v) that the emerging 'Cambridgeshire Growth Strategy' acknowledges the essential needs to co-locate homes with jobs. As the economic models favour jobs growth in the south of the County and acknowledge the challenges associated with potential job creation in the north of the County, then that is where the majority of new homes need to be located; and
- (vi) that the emerging 'Cambridgeshire Growth Strategy' recognises that whilst the market towns could sustainably accommodate some further growth, and indeed such growth could aid their regeneration, these market towns do have environmental capacities that need to be respected.

The views will be submitted to Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 23rd April 2009.

53. REVIEW OF DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE

In conjunction with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery), the Service Support Panel has considered the findings of the Democratic Structure Review Working Party and commented on the various recommendations. The comments

of the Panel are summarised in a separate report which appears elsewhere on the Council Agenda.

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

The Panel has been updated on the legislative changes introduced by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 that affect overview and scrutiny with effect from 1st April 2009. These include a Councillor call for action which allows any Council Member to refer any relevant local government matter to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee. In addition, any Member can request that a local government matter relating to his or her ward to be included on the agenda for a meeting of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel. The changes will require alterations to the Council Procedure Rules and the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules contained in the constitution.

Specific provision is now made for District Council overview and scrutiny committees to request information from a relevant County Council and partner bodies of that County Council, other than a police authority. There are also changes in the way that Overview and Scrutiny reports and recommendations must be dealt with by Cabinet and partners.

As the extension in the responsibilities of overview and scrutiny will require changes to the Council's Procedure Rules and the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, the Panel has recommended the Corporate Governance Panel to endorse the necessary amendments for submission to Council.

J A Gray
Chairman