

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING) held in the Wren Room, Countryside Centre, Hinchbrooke Country Park on Tuesday, 14 July 2009.

PRESENT: Councillor D Harty – Vice Chairman in the Chair.

Councillors M G Baker, K M Baker,
Mrs M Banerjee, P J Downes, P Godley,
Ms S L Kemp, M F Newman and J S Watt.

APOLOGY: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor P M D Godfrey.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors P L E Bucknell, E R Butler and D B Dew.

17. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on the 9th June 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

18. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor Ms S L Kemp declared a personal interest in Minute No. 22 as an employee of a subsidiary of Anglian Water.

19. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000: FORWARD PLAN

The Panel considered and noted an amended version of 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 so doing, the Panel was advised that reports on the Countywide Integrated Development Programme and Tariff, and the Development Management Submission Document were still in the course of being prepared, but it was hoped that these would be available for the Panel to scrutinise in September.

20. GREAT FEN COLLABORATION AGREEMENT

(Councillor D B Dew, Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport was in attendance for this item. Councillors P L E Bucknell and E R Butler, members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels (Social Well-Being and Economic Well-Being respectively) were also in attendance).

Following an introduction by the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport, the Panel considered a report by the Director

of Environmental and Community Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) summarising a proposal for the Council to enter with other organisations into a Great Fen Collaboration Agreement. A copy of the draft Collaboration Agreement had been circulated with the report.

The Panel accepted that the Collaboration Agreement offered the most appropriate governance arrangement between the various partners at the present stage of development of the Great Fen Project and was advised that the Agreement would be reviewed once the Project moved into a trading position. The Panel also expressed its ongoing support for the Council's involvement in the Project, which enabled the views of the local community to be represented and provided a democratic focus for the Project.

Having regard to the Collaboration Agreement itself, Members felt that whilst Clause 7.1 appeared to be intended to cover all of the salary costs of the Project Manager, it did not refer explicitly to all potential costs that might occur such as severance or personal injury claims. The Panel suggested therefore that the wording could be more precise to avoid future ambiguity. Members also raised a concern that the confidentiality provisions in Section 14 of the Agreement might impede future scrutiny and transparency in the management of the Project. The Panel felt that the section should be re-drafted to ensure that scrutiny was not precluded. Further to this, the Panel sought an annual report to be presented to partners on progress towards the achievement of the Project's aims and objectives.

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be advised of the Panel's views on the Great Fen Collaboration Agreement.

21. SCRUTINY OF HUNTINGDONSHIRE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

The Panel received and noted a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) providing the Panel with background information on the areas that fell within its responsibility with regard to scrutiny of the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership (HSP).

Members noted that the Panel would be responsible for the scrutiny of the Environment Forum and the Growth and Infrastructure Thematic Group established under the HSP and were reminded of the strategic aims and objectives of those themes as set out in the Huntingdonshire Sustainable Community Strategy.

It was reported that a joint event involving representatives of Overview and Scrutiny and the Strategic Partnership was being arranged to enable both parties to formulate better working practices. Furthermore, the Panel received details of a countywide conference for Members which would be held on 7th September 2009, focusing specifically on the scrutiny of Local Strategic Partnerships.

22. ADOPTION OF ROADS AND SEWERS

Councillor J S Watt introduced a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) by the Adoption of Roads and Sewers Working Group which had been established to investigate the processes and procedures involved with a view to expediting the adoption process.

In considering the Working Group's report, the Panel noted that DEFRA had announced that with effect from April 2011, the responsibility for 200,000km of privately owned sewers and lateral drains in England would be transferred to statutory water and sewerage companies. Further to this, it was reported that Persimmon Homes had appointed staff to assess outstanding matters which had held up the adoption process on their developments.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Panel's appreciation be expressed to the Members of the Working Group; and
- (b) that the Working Group's report and recommendations be endorsed for submission to the Cabinet for consideration.

23. WORK PLAN STUDIES

The Panel considered and noted a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) reviewing the Panel's programme of studies and informing Members of studies being undertaken by the other overview and scrutiny panels.

Having regard to the proposal to examine the process for the determination of planning applications, it was

RESOLVED

that Councillors M G Baker, P Godley, M F Newman and J S Watt be appointed to a working group to investigate the development management process.

24. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL PROGRESS

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

The Panel suggested that the problem of heavy commercial vehicles parking in the District had not been resolved by the re-opening of Alconbury Truck Stop and an update on the issue was requested from the Transportation Team Leader.

Having noted that an update had yet to be received from Anglian Water with regard to the problems encountered in the St Audrey Lane area of St Ives, the Chairman undertook to write to Anglian Water seeking to expedite a reply.

The Panel requested an update as to the status of the car park which

had been constructed at the railway station in Huntingdon, which the Head of Democratic and Central Services undertook to investigate. With regard to cycling in Huntingdonshire an update was requested for the next meeting of the Panel. The Head of Democratic and Central Services undertook to circulate the dates of future meetings of the Cambridgeshire Together Joint Accountability Committee and to arrange a substitute to attend if necessary.

25. 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 response to a question, the Panel was informed that the timescale for the development of St Neots Leisure Centre would be included in the next review of the Medium Term Plan.

Having regard to the Sustainable Communities Act, it was reported that the proposed neighbourhood forums would host the consultation element of any future proposals.

The Panel raised concern that the forecast savings in the Carbon Management Plan had been inaccurately reported in the Hunts Post. The Head of Democratic and Central Services undertook to liaise with the Communications and Marketing Manager to enable this to be drawn to the attention of the editor.

Chairman