

**GREAT FEN MASTER PLAN
(Report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being))**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its meeting on 8th September 2009, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) considered a report by the Director of Environmental and Community Services introducing the draft illustrative master plan for the Great Fen Project.

2. DELIBERATIONS

- 2.1 The Panel welcomed the production of the Masterplan as the next stage in the planning for the Great Fen project and reiterated its support for the Council's involvement in the venture. Nevertheless, while recognising that more detailed plans would follow the adoption of the Masterplan, Members felt that some emphasis should have been to the issues of business planning and finance in the Masterplan itself. Questions also were raised as to the cost of the Council's involvement in the project by way of officer time which was additional to the £20,000 per annum commitment made in the recently approved Collaboration Agreement.
- 2.2 The Panel also was anxious to ensure that there would be no long term financial implications for the Council arising from the cessation of grants awarded to the project. The Panel was mindful of the danger of creating aspirations through the wider consultation process that it might be difficult to fund in the long term. Some concern also was raised over the potential future viability of the visitor centre and whether the number of visitors and income forecast were perhaps optimistic.
- 2.3 Having previously raised doubts about the loss of arable land, the Panel was encouraged to note that some land owners who had initially resisted the project were beginning to recognise the opportunities offered and were approaching the partners to discuss the possibility of changing their farming methods in line with the project's vision.
- 2.4 Having regard to the proposed location of the visitor centre, attention was drawn to the poor condition of the B660 access road which the Panel felt would need to be improved in light of the anticipated visitor numbers.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 The Cabinet is invited to consider the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) as part of its deliberations on the Great Fen Master Plan.

Contact Officer: Mrs J Walker, Trainee Democratic Services Officer
☎ 01480 387049