
Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being)

Report of the meeting held on 6th October 2009

Matters for Information

20. THE PLACE SURVEY

In conjunction with the Panels for Environmental Well-Being and Economic Well-Being, the Panel for Social Well-Being has received a presentation on the findings of The Place Survey. It is a statutory requirement that all local authorities undertake the survey every two years. It replaces the Best Value User Satisfaction Survey and is designed to capture local people's views, experiences and perceptions about the area in which they live. The form of the Survey in terms of its timing and the questions asked are closely prescribed by the Department for Communities and Local Government. Respondents are selected from a random sample across the District, all aged 18 years or above, and the responses have been weighted to reflect the local population.

The Panel has noted that for a majority of National Indicators, Huntingdonshire exceeds the figures for both the County and for the National context. Attention has been drawn to areas identified by respondents as having the most need of improvement in Huntingdonshire, namely activities for teenagers, road and pavement repairs, public transport, traffic congestion and shopping facilities. In addition, Members have been acquainted with the Survey results in respect of the improvement targets in the Cambridgeshire Local Area Agreement. In acknowledging the limits of the information presented on the improvement areas, the Panel has noted plans to obtain further qualitative data in these areas through a series of focus groups. The Panel will consider a report on the findings from the focus groups in three months time.

21. REVIEW OF ONLINE PETITIONS

The Panel has been acquainted with details of online petitions received since the facility was introduced to the Council's website via the Modern.Gov software system in July 2008. Whilst it has been evident that the launch of the facility generated initial interest in the use of online petitions, the Panel has registered concern at the low level of use of the facility. Nevertheless, Members are of the view that it will become a more popular method of public engagement in the future. In the meantime, it has been suggested that online

petitions might be used proactively by the Council for consultation purposes. The feasibility of this is to be investigated.

22. APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANELS

The Panel has been acquainted with progress towards the appointment of independent Members to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels. Having noted the terms of a Scheme of Co-option, the Head of Democratic and Central Services has been authorised to convene a Panel of Members of the Social Well-Being Panel to sit on an Appointments Panel who will be responsible for making recommendations on the recruitment of two independent Members to the Panel. A programme of publicity designed to generate expressions of interest in joining the Panels from members of the public is currently being undertaken.

23. PROVISION OF PLAY FACILITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The Provision of Play Facilities Working Group has submitted preliminary findings on its work to the Panel. Members have been reminded that the Working Group had previously been tasked with making recommendations on achieving an even distribution of play facilities across the District and on how the ongoing revenue costs associated with such facilities might be met.

The Panel has considered a number of options identified by the Working Group, which might achieve the study's objectives. These include the transfer of ownership of facilities in towns to Town Councils and the subsequent redeployment of the maintenance budget associated with them to provide a District-wide service; offering a maintenance agreement to Parishes for the upkeep of their facilities; splitting responsibility for maintenance costs between the District Council, Town or Parish Councils and users of facilities, and employing an additional member of staff within the Operations Division to conduct a twice weekly inspection of facilities. These will only be viable provided there is sufficient take-up by Parishes. Following discussions on the options identified, the Working Group has been requested to meet with the Executive Councillor for Operational and Countryside Services to discuss them before proceeding with their study.

Other Matters of Interest

24. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SOCIAL WELL-BEING) - PROGRESS

The Panel has reviewed its programme of studies. Councillor R J West has been appointed as the Panel's representative to meet with the local branch of the Care Quality Commission to discuss Members concerns about the Commission's Enforcement Policy.

The Panel will consider NHS Cambridgeshire's consultation on Primary Care Out of Hours Services at their December meeting. A local event hosted by NHS Cambridgeshire will be held on 30th November 2009, details of which have been circulated to all Members. Following this event, the Panel will formulate its comments for submission to NHS Cambridgeshire.

25. WORK PLAN STUDIES

The Panel has reviewed its work plan and received details of studies being undertaken by the other Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

26. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 – FORWARD PLAN

The Panel has been acquainted with details of the current Forward Plan of Key Decisions. Items entitled Older Persons Housing Strategy Update and St Ivo Leisure Centre – Proposals for Development will be considered at the Panel's meetings in November and December respectively.

27. SCRUTINY

The Panel has considered the latest edition of the Decision Digest.

S J Criswell
Chairman