

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING) held in the Wren Room, Countryside Centre, Hinchingsbrooke Country Park on Tuesday, 13 October 2009.

PRESENT: Councillor P M D Godfrey – Chairman.

Councillors M G Baker, K M Baker,  
P J Downes, J J Dutton, P M D Godfrey,  
P Godley, D Harty, M F Newman and  
J S Watt.

APOLOGY: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor Mrs M Banerjee.

### **38. WELCOME**

The Chairman welcomed Councillor J J Dutton to his first meeting as a member of the Environmental Well-Being Panel.

### **39. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 8th September 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **40. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

No declarations were received.

### **41. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000: FORWARD PLAN**

The Panel considered and noted 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, Members were informed that although a report on "Huntingdon Town Hall - The Way Forward" had been listed as being subject to scrutiny by this Panel, the report dealt with land ownership issues and was therefore being considered by the Overview and Scrutiny (Economic Well-being) Panel.

### **42. THE PLACE SURVEY**

The Panel received a presentation by the Policy and Strategic Services Manager on the outcome of the Place Survey (a copy of the survey results is appended in the Minute Book) which had replaced the Best Value user satisfaction survey that the local authorities previously had been required to undertake. The Survey had been designed to capture local people's views, experiences and perceptions about the area that they lived in. Members were

informed that a questionnaire had been distributed to 3,000 randomly selected households in the District and 1,177 completed questionnaires returned. Weightings had been applied to the data which had adjusted the sample to ensure it was representative of the overall population.

The Panel's attention was drawn to the 18 national indicators measured by the Place Survey and informed that the Council had performed better than the County average against 11 of the indicators. In the case of only four of the indicators had the Council scored lower than the county average, the most significant being the percentage of people who agreed they could influence decisions in their locality.

Having regard to environmental indicators, the Panel was encouraged to note that satisfaction in the District was above the national average and the highest in Cambridgeshire in relation to refuse and recycling services.

Members noted the aspects which had been identified by respondents as being most in need of improvement in the District. In this regard, the Panel requested a breakdown by ward level of the responses relating to activities for teenagers and public transport. Members also requested the results at ward level for NI4 - the percentage of people who agreed that they could influence decisions in their locality.

It was reported, that as the place survey only supplied quantitative data, focus groups would be established across the County to enable officers to identify what actions would need to be taken to improve residents' perception of their respective areas.

Members acknowledged that whilst comparing results against national and neighbouring districts was of value, it was suggested that a comparison against districts with similar socio-economic characteristics would also be beneficial for establishing comparisons and setting benchmarks.

#### **43. APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANELS**

The Panel received a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the Council's scheme of co-option for the Overview and Scrutiny Panels. Members were informed that a programme of publicity was being undertaken to attract expressions of interest in joining the Panels from members of the public.

RESOLVED

that the Head of Democratic and Central Services be authorised to convene a politically balanced panel of Members to sit on an appointments panel to make recommendations on the co-option of two independent members to the Panel.

#### **44. WORK PLAN STUDIES AND WORKING GROUP TEMPLATES**

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.

In noting that the development management process review was progressing well, Members were asked to consider further possible subjects for investigation. As climate change was the theme for debate at the Council meeting to be held in December, it was suggested that this may be an appropriate subject for a future study. Members agreed to discuss this matter further at their next meeting.

#### **45. 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 and issues that had been discussed previously.

In so doing, the Panel noted that Anglian Water's collection manager had requested a list of questions to which he endeavoured to provide a response by the next Panel meeting.

With regard to cycling, the Panel requested an update as to progress with the Perry village cycle route as it was thought that funding had been received for this scheme. Members also questioned whether the dual use of footpaths for pedestrians and cyclists could be encouraged in villages. Furthermore, it was reported that the cycleway planned alongside the guided bus way would not extend to Huntingdonshire.

#### **46. SCRUTINY**

The Panel considered and noted the latest edition of the Council's Decision Digest summarising the Council's decisions since the previous meeting.

Chairman