

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SOCIAL WELL-BEING) held in the Wren Room, Countryside Centre, Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, Brampton Road, Huntingdon, PE29 6DB on Tuesday, 3 November 2009.

PRESENT: Councillor S J Criswell – Chairman.

Councillors Mrs K E Cooper, S J Criswell,
P H Dakers, J W Davies, J E Garner,
Mrs P A Jordan, P G Mitchell and R J West.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors A Monk and J M Sadler.

50. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 6th October 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

51. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor Mrs P A Jordan declared a personal interest in Minute No. 53 by virtue of her employment in the NHS.

Councillor P G Mitchell declared a personal interest in Minute No. 54 by virtue of his involvement with the Stilton Skate Park project, which had received grant funding.

52. 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) which had been prepared by the Leader of the Council for the period 1st November 2009 to 28th February 2010.

53. STUDY - PARKING AT HINCHINGBROOKE HOSPITAL

The Panel welcomed Mrs R Clapham, Chairman of Cambridgeshire Link's Hinchingsbrooke Hospital Working Group and Ms E Stubbs, Cambridgeshire Link Co-ordinator, who had been invited to the meeting to discuss the study on parking at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital. Having been reminded of progress of the study to date and in receiving a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Panel's attention was drawn to responses which had been received from Hinchingsbrooke Hospital to questions raised by the Panel on the Hospital's Green Transport Plan. Members were advised that information on the car park management contract were currently being awaited.

Having provided an introduction on the range of work undertaken by

Cambridgeshire Link, Mrs Clapham and Ms Stubbs welcomed the opportunity to work with the Panel on its study. Cambridgeshire Link had already received comments by users of the Hospital on its car parks, mainly relating to the level of charges being levied for parking at the Hospital and the perceived lack of flexibility afforded to those visiting the Hospital who required emergency treatment.

Mrs Clapham suggested that consideration should be given to ways of making charging for parking fairer, perhaps by introducing a "pay on exit" system for users of the Hospital. Members then discussed the future management of the car parks in the context of changes to the Hospital's governance arrangements, which were currently subject to consultation with stakeholders. It was concluded that the Stakeholder Panel established by the East of England Strategic Health Authority to oversee the consultation, should be informed of the need for the specification for franchise bids to include details of the Hospital's car park management arrangements.

Councillor Mrs P A Jordan drew attention to the parking provisions that were in place across the different Hospital wards. Parents and carers of children admitted to Holly Ward, the Hospital's Children's Ward, automatically received a free parking permit for the duration of their visit. There also existed the opportunity for car park users to purchase weekly permits. Councillor Mrs Jordan also commented on the parking problems experienced by staff who worked on the site and the fact that they too were subject to penalties if they failed to comply with the specified terms for using the car parks.

Members discussed the way forward and agreed that a representative of the Hospital should be invited to attend a future meeting to present information on the Hospital's current car parking management contract and to discuss matters raised in the course of the study to date. It was further agreed that, owing to their interests in the study, Cambridgeshire Link would be invited to the meeting.

On behalf of the Panel, the Chairman thanked Mrs Clapham and Ms Stubbs for their attendance and contributions at the meeting.

54. DISABILITY ACCESS - JOINT ADVOCACY AND ADVICE SERVICES

(Councillor K J Churchill, Executive Councillor for Housing and Public Health, was in attendance for this Item).

With the assistance of a report by the Community Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel were acquainted with the background to the support provided by the Council to community and charitable organisations operating in the District. The report had been submitted to the Panel because it contained matters covered in a previous Overview and Scrutiny study on disability access, which related to the provision of joint advocacy and advice services and the identification of other opportunities for joint working between organisations supporting those with disabilities.

The Executive Councillor for Housing and Public Health reported that the Council had entered into joint commissioning arrangements with various voluntary sector providers in 2008 and a four year agreement

with Disability Information Services Huntingdonshire (DISH) in April 2009. Members' attention was drawn to the terms of the service level agreement, which had been introduced, including the performance expected and mandatory organisational criteria. The Panel were advised that the performance of the commissioned organisations was monitored by Officers and Members on a quarterly and bi-annual basis respectively.

The Community Manager drew the Panel's attention to a number of achievements by DISH in the previous six months period and reported on the range of work being undertaken by other agencies and specialist services in assisting those with disabilities. Specific reference was made to the fact that the internet now made advice and support available to individuals at a time and place, which was convenient for them.

In response to a question on whether there existed any needs that were not being met, the Community Manager commented that a range of services was currently available across the District and that, at present, he was not aware of any deficiencies in the current level of service. However, this did not mean that other unique service requirements would not arise in the future. Having acknowledged the difficulties faced by a number of smaller voluntary organisations in conducting day to day back office functions, it was reported that the Cambridgeshire Funders Group were currently considering ways of supporting these functions and that this had also been identified as an action within Cambridgeshire County Council's Community Engagement Strategy.

55. PETITION - HILL RISE PARK, ST IVES

The Panel gave consideration to a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) providing details of a petition, which had been received from residents living within the Hill Rise area of St Ives. The Panel noted that the petition had been signed by 16 persons and requested the Council to erect an automatic barrier across the entrance to Hill Rise Park to prevent nuisance caused by drivers entering the park late at night. The petition organiser, Mr M Rigby, would formally present the petition to Members at the Panel's meeting in January 2010. To facilitate discussion at that meeting Members requested information on the actions considered by Officers and the police to address the issue that had been raised.

The Panel's attention was drawn to a similar problem previously encountered at The Riverside Park in St Neots, which had resulted in the installation of a manual barrier at the entrance to the site. Members requested further information on the arrangements in place at St Neots, in order that a similar solution could be considered at Hill Rise Park.

56. CAMBRIDGESHIRE HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(a) Update

As the District Council representative on Cambridgeshire

County Council's Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee, Councillor R J West provided Members with an update on matters discussed at a recent meeting of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee. Members noted concerns raised relating to a projected overspend in Adult Support Services and that a Special Meeting of the Committee would be held on 11th September 2009 to consider this issue. Attention was also drawn to the current NHS consultation on the Future of Primary Care Out of Hours Services in Cambridgeshire. The consultation would be considered by the Panel in December.

Discussion also took place on the future governance of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital. Attention was drawn to the fact that franchise bids would be required to provide the same level of services as at 2007 and to indicate what level of contribution would be made towards paying off the Hospital's existing debt. Councillor West informed the Panel that under the new arrangements all assets would either be leased or licensed and would remain the property of the NHS. Members expressed concern that the Strategic Health Authority might select the franchisee that undertook to pay off the largest proportion of the Hospital's debt. Instead, they should be assessed on the quality of services that would be provided. As the District Council representative on the Stakeholder Panel, the Chairman reported that it was not currently intended to provide the Stakeholder Panel with details of the franchise bids or release them into the public domain. Members concurred with a suggestion that the Chairman should approach the Council's Chief Executive and Chairman of the Stakeholder Panel, to request an opportunity to consider the franchisee bids in a private session.

(b) Appointment of Substitute

RESOLVED

that Councillor J W Davies be appointed as substitute Member on the Cambridgeshire Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee.

57. WORKPLAN 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.

58. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (SOCIAL WELL-BEING) - PROGRESS

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) which contained details of actions taken in response to recent discussions and decisions. Members were advised that Councillor R J

West would be meeting with the Regional Manager of the local branch of the Care Quality Commission on 20th November 2009 and that the Corporate Plan Working Group's next meeting would be on 19th November 2009.

Councillor P G Mitchell delivered an update on the outcome of discussions with the Executive Councillor for Operational and Countryside Services on the study into play facilities in the District. Consensus had been reached that the Working Group should investigate the possibility of offering Town and Parish Councils the opportunity to enter into an agreement with the District Council for the inspection and maintenance of play facilities. Under the agreement, costs would be split three ways between the District Council (40%), the Town/Parish Council (40%) and users of facilities (20%). Officers were currently investigating the cost implications of this proposal.

As the maintenance of a number of play facilities was linked to Section 106 schemes, Councillor Mitchell drew attention to a report, which had recently been considered by the Development Management Panel on the Monitoring of Section 106 Agreements. He proposed that the Social Well-Being Panel should monitor schemes which had already been allocated to new developments and those where funding had been received for the future maintenance of facilities. It was argued that Operations and Leisure Services were responsible for these schemes and the Panel should monitor and scrutinise them as they fell within its remit. Subject to the Development Management Panel approving the proposal, Members agreed that the monitoring of these schemes should be included within their work programme.

In respect of The Place Survey, it was reported that further work by focus groups would not have been completed in time for the Panel's January meeting but that the results of this work should be available for the Panel's meeting in February/March 2010.

59. SCRUTINY

In scrutinising the 98th Edition of the Digest of Decisions taken by the Cabinet and the other Panels, etc. Members raised the following queries:-

Huntingdon Town Hall - The Way Forward - Councillor J E Garner expressed his support for the proposal to investigate the feasibility of transferring the freehold of the building to Huntingdon Town Council in exchange for land currently owned by them.

Local Procurement - The Chairman, together with Councillor R J West, expressed support for the decision of the Economic Well-Being Panel to refer the subject of local procurement to the Local Strategic Partnership's Economic Prosperity and Skills Thematic Group.

Chairman