

Decision Digest

Edition 99

Monthly summary of the decisions taken at meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny and other Panels for the period

10:10 CLIMATE CHANGE

The Council is to register its support for the 10:10 Climate Change Campaign. The campaign is a community wide project which targets individuals, companies and institutions to pledge a reduction in their carbon footprint by 10% during 2010. In backing the campaign, both the Panel and Cabinet supported its promotion throughout the District.

CAR PARKING REVIEW

Both the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) and Cabinet have considered the findings of the Members Car Parking Working Group into the impact of the revised charging arrangements that came into effect on 1st October 2008 following the review of the Council's car parking policy. Issues highlighted included eligibility anomalies in the season ticket scheme, environmental issues, parking at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park and concerns over the new guided bus scheme.

Having approved the Group's recommendations for further change as part of a revised off-street parking places order for implementation from 1st June 2010, the Cabinet has reiterated the need for representations to be made to Cambridgeshire County Council over the potentially adverse effects on the District Council's parking

income and policies should they proceed with their decision to permit parking at the new Cambridgeshire Guided Bus Scheme "Park and Ride" site free of charge.

At the same time the Cabinet has expressed disappointment that the Car Parking Working Group, had not considered in greater depth the opportunity to address environmental issues and changes to travel patterns through the car parking strategy. However, Members acknowledged that the Group's work constituted an interim review and therefore has invited them to consider issues such as encouraging the use of low emission vehicles, public transport, cycling and walking as part of the next scheduled review of the car parking action plan in 2010.

In discussing the Group's recommendations to introduce charging at Cambridge Street and the Riverside Park, St Neots with some free parking for a two hour period at the Riverside to support its recreational use, the Cabinet has expressed concern over the lack of detail for the management of such arrangements. These views will be reported to the next meeting of the Members Car Parking Working Group scheduled for 16th December 2009.

TRANSIT SITES FOR GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS

The contents of the East of England Plan Policy on Gypsy and Travellers have been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny (Environmental Well-Being) Panel and Cabinet. Particular reference was made to the requirement for Councils to make provision for transit sites. Members have acknowledged the evidence of need for a transit site in Huntingdonshire and suggested that a location be identified swiftly so that action can be taken to address the number of unauthorised encampments in the District. With this in mind the Cabinet has instructed officers to consider further the logistics of providing a site and to prepare a bid for a Government grant at the appropriate time.

THE REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY REVIEW - STATUTORY CONSULTATION RESPONSE

The Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny (Environmental Well-Being) Panel have been acquainted with the Council's suggested response to four growth scenarios proposed by the East of England Regional Assembly for the period up to 2031. Members have concluded that the only viable option and scale of potential future growth that can be supported is scenario 1. This scenario "rolls forward" the housing growth rates established by the current Regional Plan for another 10 years and will be the highest level of growth that most Council's within the region considered can accommodate. For Huntingdonshire this scenario will require the delivery of approx 550 homes a year in order to meet a 20 year target of 11,080 and is in line with the spatial vision set out in the adopted Core Strategy. The other three scenarios proposed faster rates of growth which are not considered

sustainable having regard to the lack of employment opportunities locally, further traffic congestion and the inability of the local infrastructure to accommodate the projected rates of development.

A response will be sent to EERA and officers have been requested to continue their work with all Cambridgeshire Authorities to produce a co-ordinated joint response on behalf of the County.

HUNTINGDON WEST AREA ACTION PLAN SUBMISSION DOCUMENT

The contents of the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan Submission Document has been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) and Cabinet. The action plan seeks to set a framework for the west of Huntingdon town centre to help deliver planned growth and regeneration.

The Panel has reiterated its support for the redevelopment and regeneration of the area, although there is ongoing concern on the part of some members over the highway implications of the proposal. The Panel has been informed that the modelling for the proposed new link road has taken into account the proposals for development, and the Highways Authority are satisfied that the proposed level of growth is sustainable.

In recommending to Council that the document be adopted, the Cabinet has authorised the Head of Planning Services to complete the final submission.

COUNTY-WIDE AND INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME TARIFF

The Overview and Scrutiny (Environmental Well-Being) Panel has considered their report on the draft Cambridgeshire Integrated Development Programme which brings together the various documents available to identify infrastructure needs on a sub-regional basis. The Panel has noted that this exercise has been useful in determining strategic and local infrastructure along with the levels of tariff in liability terms that can be applied in Cambridgeshire and will be an essential tool to guide future development.

STUDY – PARKING AT HINCHINGBROOKE HOSPITAL

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) has received responses from Hinchingsbrooke Hospital on the Hospital's Green Transport Plan. Further information on the car park management contract is currently awaited. Representatives of Cambridgeshire LINK were in attendance and Members have been informed that comments by users of the Hospital on its car parks have already been received. Comments relate to the level of charges being levied and the perceived lack of flexibility afforded to those visiting the Hospital requiring emergency treatment.

The future management of the car parks in the context of changes to the Hospital's governance arrangements has been discussed. It has been 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.

A representative of the Hospital will 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. Cambridgeshire LINK will also be invited to this meeting.

DISABILITY ACCESS – JOINT ADVOCACY AND ADVICE SERVICES

Background to the support provided by the Council to community and charitable organisations operating in the District has been received by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being). The Council has entered into a joint service level agreement with Disability Information Services Huntingdonshire (DISH) and attention has been drawn to the terms of the agreement. DISH has made a number of achievements in the last six months and has undertaken a range of work with other agencies and specialist services in assisting those with disabilities.

The Panel has acknowledged the difficulties faced by a number of smaller voluntary organisations in conducting day to day back office functions. This matter is being addressed by the Cambridgeshire Funders Group and through Cambridgeshire County Council's Community Engagement Strategy.

PETITION – HILL RISE PARK, ST IVES

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) has been acquainted with details of a petition, which has been received from residents living in the Hill Rise area of St Ives. The petition has been signed by 16 individuals and requests 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 will formally present the petition to the Panel at its meeting in January 2010. Actions considered by officers and the police to address this issue have been requested in time for this meeting.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(a) Update

Councillor R J West has provided Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) with an update on matters discussed at a recent meeting of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee, which included reference to a projected overspend in Adult Support Services and the current NHS consultation on the Future of Primary Care Out of Hours Services in Cambridgeshire. The consultation will be considered by the Panel in December.

Discussion also has taken place on the future governance of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital. Bidders for the franchise will be required to provide the same level of services as at 2007 and to indicate what level of contribution will be made towards paying off the Hospital's existing debt. Concern has been expressed that the Strategic Health Authority might select the franchisee that undertakes to pay off the largest proportion of the Hospital's debt rather than on the basis of the quality of services that will be provided. It has been reported that the Stakeholder Panel appointed to oversee the consultation will not be apprised with details of the franchise bids as this information will not be released in to the public domain. Members have 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 Substitution

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) has appointed Councillor J W Davies as the substitute Member on the Cambridgeshire Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee.

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

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) has reviewed its programme of studies and in so doing, has been updated on the outcome of a recent meeting of the Provision of Play Facilities Working Group. Investigations are ongoing and a further meeting will be held in mid-December.

Subject to the Development Management Panel approving a proposal for the Panel to monitor Section 106 schemes already allocated to new developments and those where funding has been received for the future maintenance of facilities, Members have agreed that this should be included within the Panel's work programme.

ENFORCEMENT POLICIES

The Cabinet has been acquainted with the implications of the Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008. The Act is an important element in delivering the Government's commitment to the implementation of the Hampton agenda on regulatory reform and the reduction of the burden on businesses. It delivers a number of distinct but related policy areas relating

to the advancement of Hampton's vision of a national and local regulatory system that is risk based, proportionate and effective. It seeks to establish a primary authority scheme to improve consistency of advice and enforcement which will prove resource intensive for those Councils nominated by businesses to be their primary authority.

STATEMENT OF GAMBLING PRINCIPLES

The Cabinet has reviewed the contents of a revised Statement of Principles under the Gambling Act 2005. The statement has been updated to take into account the latest regulations and guidance issued by the Gambling Commission.

BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM PLAN

The Cabinet has reviewed the draft 2010/11 Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan for the period up to 2014/15 and the longer term financial plan forecast for 2023/2024. In so doing, Executive Councillors have concurred with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) that the level of spending proposed for Huntingdon bus station appears to be excessive and that investigations should take place into the possible refurbishment options. The Panel were also of the view that the Council should recognise the benefits of leisure centres and the likely return on any investment made.

The Panel also referred to the assumptions on which predictions about the effect of the guided bus have been made and questioned the level of provision for the Great Fen Project.

The draft Budget and Medium Term Plan will be dealt with by Council at its meeting on 2nd December 2009.

DRAFT CAMBRIDGESHIRE INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Consideration has been given by the Cabinet to the work of Cambridgeshire Horizons and Cambridgeshire local authorities in producing an integrated development programme. The programme brings together the various planning documents available to identify infrastructure needs of the area on a sub-regional basis. The exercises are a valuable tool in determining strategic and local infrastructure along with levels of tariff and their viability that can guide future development.

CUSTOMER SERVICES MONITORING REPORT

The Panel has received the Customer Service quarterly performance report for the period July to September 2009. Members have been informed that all customer service targets have been met and high levels of customer satisfaction has been achieved despite adverse trends in the economy which have led to calls being of a more complex nature. Customer Excellence Awards had been received by both Ramsey and Yaxley Customer Information Centres.

The Panel was made aware of the potential risk in continuing to rely on the goodwill of the staff to meet service targets. This and the level of vacancies will be monitored by the Head of Service.

PLANNING BRIEF – OLD FIRE STATION AND FORMER DEPOT SITE, HUNTINGDON STREET, ST NEOTS.

Development opportunities for land around the Old Fire Station and former Depot off Huntingdon Street, St Neots

have been discussed by the Development Management Panel. In discussing the options, the Panel has recognised the potential to incorporate adjacent land currently used as a car park and possibly part of Shady Walk recreation ground in the proposed development of the site.

Having taken into account the amenity of neighbours, the importance of the build frontage and adjacent listed buildings, the Panel has considered that the site would be appropriate for a variety of town centre uses, particularly the possibility of appropriate community and leisure development.

It has also been suggested that a covered walkway from the potential new development to neighbouring car parks would be an asset to the town and that the space created could be used for exhibitions and displays of art work by local people.

Assurances have been given that the scale and mass of any new development would be sympathetic to the town centre and would be complemented by a suitable landscaping scheme. The scheme will be discussed at Cabinet's December meeting.

URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK, CHEQUERS COURT, HUNTINGDON

Two possible options for the redevelopment of land around Chequers Court shopping area in the centre of Huntingdon have been presented to the Development Management Panel.

In expressing a preference for scenario 1, the Panel has welcomed the opportunity that the redevelopment will bring to unattractive buildings and create additional car parking and to

improve the environment and routes into the heart of the town centre.

Although favouring scenario 1, the Panel has commented that any large retail space should have direct access to an adjacent car park. The Panel has indicated its support for the proposed redevelopment in principle subject to the incorporation of the foregoing comments in the draft document prior to its submission for adoption to the Cabinet.

APPEAL AGAINST NON-DETERMINATION

Details of an appeal against the non-determination of an application for the demolition and clearance of redundant buildings, reclamation housing, employment, a neighbourhood centre and open space at RAF Upwood, Ramsey Road, Bury have been reported to the Development Management Panel. The District Council, as local planning authority, can no longer determine the application but Members have noted the reasons for refusal which would have been presented to them if the application had been considered.

ENFORCEMENT ACTION – YAXLEY

Subject to the outcome of an appeal to the Planning Inspectorate, the Development Management Panel has authorised the Head of Planning Services to serve a breach of condition notice (28 days after the date of the appeal hearing if appropriate) in respect of the failure of Yaxley Parish Council to comply with a condition arising from a planning permission for the raising/lowering a safety netting around two sides of the recreation ground at Daimler Avenue, Yaxley.

DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS

At their November meeting, the Development Control Panel determined eleven applications of which nine were approved and two refused.

Of wider significance to the District was the Panel's decision to refuse an application for the erection of a wind farm and ancillary infrastructure on land north of Toseland Village, West of Graveley in the Offords Parish and to approve an application to construct a new link road on land between Brampton Road and Ermine Street, Huntingdon.