

Decision Digest

Edition 100

Monthly summary of the decisions taken at meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny and other Panels for the period 7th - 22nd December 2009.

GREENHOUSE PROJECT

The Overview and Scrutiny (Environmental Well-Being) Panel has welcomed an update on the District-Council led retrofitting demonstration project for private housing in the District. Members have suggested that the financial savings that can be achieved by householders should be published alongside the associated carbon savings, as this may influence residents when they make their decisions on energy conservation measures.

The Panel has asked to visit the retrofitted properties prior to the formal launch in June 2010.

DEVELOPMENT BRIEF: OLD FIRE STATION, ST. NEOTS

The Overview and Scrutiny (Environmental Well-Being) Panel has indicated their support for the redevelopment of land in and around the old fire station and depot, Huntingdon Street, St. Neots, a redundant site that requires design guidance to help with its marketing. There is interest locally in improving the leisure infrastructure within St. Neots and the Panel has agreed that this could be a potential site for leisure development. Members have been assured that any development at this site will be appropriate to its town centre location.

DEVELOPMENT BRIEF: CHEQUERS COURT, HUNTINGDON

The Overview and Scrutiny (Environmental Well-Being) Panel has considered the redevelopment opportunities in and around Chequers Court Shopping Area, in the centre of Huntingdon. Redevelopment of Chequers Court is necessary for the town centre to be reinvigorated and Members have been acquainted with two potential scenarios for the site. However, future development plans will depend on land availability given the number of private owners involved.

The Panel has expressed its support for the development brief but has raised concerns over the possible loss of the petrol filling station currently operated by Sainsburys which it was considered will lead to a lack of competition in the town.

ST. NEOTS HEALTH CHECK

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) has expressed support for the purpose and process involved in the St. Neots Health Check. Work undertaken to-date has identified what can be done to improve St. Neots and to help meet the likely demands arising from the predicted growth of the town.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REMITS AND STUDIES

Having been reminded of their remit, the Overview and Scrutiny (Environmental Well-Being) Panel has decided to discuss, at its next meeting, how Councils can reduce the carbon footprint of others.

OVERVIEW OF NEW WEB SITE

The Overview and Scrutiny (Economic Well-Being) Panel has received a presentation highlighting the improvements and enhancements that have been made to the Council's website following the completion of phase I of the project to transfer the existing system onto a new technical infrastructure.

Members heard that the website was popular with users who could now complete 80 plus electronic forms and have access to 2000 plus downloadable documents.

Members acknowledged the improvements that had been made to the system and the economies of providing online services. A soft launch of the system will take place in January prior to the main launch in February. Initiation of Phase II of the upgrade to include more new features and personalisation would continue through 2011.

PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Overview and Scrutiny Panels have considered the performance of the authority against its priority objectives in the quarter to 30th September 2009.

The Social Well-Being Panel has discussed trends relating to the number of households living in temporary accommodation and the performance levels reported in respect of the

throughput of people experiencing arts interventions. The level of budget available to the Leisure Centres for promotional and marketing purposes was also discussed.

The Economic Well-Being Panel noted the drop in Leisure Centre income reflecting the economic climate and changes brought about by Cambridgeshire County Council in schools' sports funding provision and acknowledged that the situation was unlikely to improve in the short term. The Panel also agreed to pass on comments received regarding the perceived inadequacies of the new Leisure Centre Forum to Cabinet.

The Environmental Well-Being Panel was pleased to note that all but one of the indicators where statistics are available are positive.

SCRUTINY OF HUNTINGDONSHIRE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

The Overview and Scrutiny (Environmental Well-Being) Panel has adopted the protocol that has been drawn up in order that the Council might fulfil its statutory duty to scrutinise the Strategic Partnership.

The protocol had been previously endorsed by the Strategic Partnership Executive prior to its submission to the Strategic Partnership Board in January.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMIC WELL-BEING) PROGRESS

A report on the night time economy, from a hospital's perspective, is anticipated for the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny (Economic Well-Being) Panel. This is being prepared by a specialist member of the Health and Wellbeing Thematic Group.

A presentation on the Council's Covert Surveillance Policy by the Council's Solicitor is scheduled for the January meeting of the Panel.

AGEING WELL IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE - OLDER PEOPLES' HOUSING STRATEGY

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) has reviewed the draft Older Peoples' Housing Strategy entitled 'Ageing Well in Huntingdonshire: Housing and Healthy Ageing for Older People 2009 – 2014' which was produced in partnership with NHS Cambridgeshire.

Attention was drawn to the Strategy's objectives, which focused on the four key areas of providing support to older people, undertaking home adaptations, employing more energy efficient measures within homes and providing "extra care" services to the elderly.

The Panel has discussed a number of matters, which includes the figures presented within the Strategy, the level of service provided by Occupational Therapists within the District, the affordability of home adaptations, the locality of sheltered accommodation and the possibility of increasing the age of individuals covered by the Strategy to 75+ years. Final comment was made on the low level of accommodation available to elderly couples.

NHS CONSULTATION: THE FUTURE OF PRIMARY CARE OUT-OF-HOURS SERVICES FOR RESIDENTS IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Details of a consultation exercise being undertaken by NHS Cambridgeshire on the future of primary care out-of-hours services for residents in Cambridgeshire have been received by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being). Members agreed to submit their own individual response to the consultation.

FUTURE GOVERNANCE OF HINCHINGBROOKE HOSPITAL

The contents of the first edition of "Next Steps News", a newsletter designed to encourage the public to become involved in shaping the future of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital, was noted by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being). Attention was drawn to the opportunity for the public to comment on the proposals. Members questioned whether the public would be able to influence the process given the type of questions being posed within the newsletter. In that light, Members agreed that they would submit their own comments to the Stakeholder Panel.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

An update on matters currently being considered by the Cambridgeshire Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee was delivered by Councillor R J West to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being). The Committee has appointed a Working Group to consider issues surrounding the future governance of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital, to which Councillor West has been appointed.

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

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) has reviewed its work plan and received updates on the following:-

- Disability Access study;
- Care Quality Commission;
- The Place Survey focus groups;
- Launch of the new HDC website;
- Monitoring of Section 106 Agreements;

- Car parking at Hinchingbrooke Hospital; and
- Petition concerning Hill Rise Park, St Ives.

Details of a consultation being undertaken by NHS Cambridgeshire proposing new patient rights for inclusion within the NHS Constitution have been received by the Panel. The matter will be raised at the Panel's meeting in January 2010.

HUNTINGDON WEST AREA ACTION PLAN - PROPOSED SUBMISSION

The Development Management Panel has noted the content of an Area Action Plan which establishes a framework for guiding growth and regeneration in the area west of Huntingdon Town Centre. Representations on the Area Action Plan at this stage of the process are limited to whether the plan is sound or otherwise. It is anticipated that the document will be examined in public in September.

DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS

At the December meeting, the Development Management Panel considered ten applications of which 6 were approved, 3 refused and one deferred. Of note was the consent granted for the construction of a second all weather football pitch with floodlighting at St. Ivo Outdoor Centre and building extensions to accommodate additional changing room facilities and a groundsman's store, an overflow car parking area, footpath and cycleway.

STANDARDS ISSUES

In addition to its regular business the Standards Committee has -

- ◆ noted the transfer of the work of the Adjudication Panel

(Standards for England) to the new General Regulatory Chamber (GRC) with effect from January 2010. This transfer will bring together individual tribunals that hear appeals on regulatory issues;

- ◆ noted proposals to improve the content of the standards and conduct pages on the Council's website and suggested other items which could be developed and might be useful to users of the site; and
- ◆ viewed the latest training DVD produced by Standards for England to help Members involved in the assessment of complaints.

CALCULATION OF COUNCIL TAX BASE 2010/11

In accordance with the legal requirement placed on the Council, the Corporate Governance Panel has set the tax base for the whole of the District for the year 2010/11 as 58,580 with figures apportioned for each Parish of the District.

ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE RISK MANAGEMENT

The Corporate Governance Panel has endorsed the content of a revised Risk Management Strategy and made minor suggestions to the definitions within the environment and environmental risk categories.

REVIEW OF THE ANTI-FRAUD AND CORRUPTION STRATEGY

The outcome of a review of the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy has been reported to the Corporate Governance Panel. It was agreed that the Chairman and the External Auditors should also be informed of all cases of

significant fraud and corruption and reflected within the revised Strategy.

EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORTS: USE OF RESOURCES 2009 AND THE ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER FOR 2008/09

Details of the external auditor's reports on the Council's Use of Resources for 2009 and Annual Audit Letter for 2008/09 and their respective action plans have been presented to the Corporate Governance Panel. Both reports conclude that the Council's overall management arrangements and performance is of a satisfactory standard. Attention was also drawn to the launch of the "One Place" website.

CODE OF PROCUREMENT

The Corporate Governance Panel has endorsed the content of an action plan designed to ensure future compliance with the Council's Code of Procurement.