

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMIC WELL-BEING) held in the Corporate Training Suite, Eastfield House, 6 Latham Road, Huntingdon, PE29 6YE on Thursday, 14 January 2010.

PRESENT: Councillor J D Ablewhite – Chairman.  
Councillors A N Gilbert, M F Shellens and R G Tuplin.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors J T Bell, Mrs J A Dew, L W McGuire and G S E Thorpe.

### **61. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 10th December 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **62. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

No declarations were received.

### **63. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 - FORWARD PLAN**

The Panel considered 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 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010 to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2010. Members noted that the Budget and Medium Term Plan and the Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators would be considered at the next meeting.

### **64. ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN**

With the aid of a report by the Head of Law, Property and Governance (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel considered the Annual Report on the performance of the Council's assets against a range of criteria prior to its submission to Cabinet. In noting the changes in performance compared with the previous year and other issues highlighted by the Performance Management Indicators, Members were advised that generally the Council's performance compared favourably with other authorities. It was stressed that the compilation of some figures had been delayed to take into account the new offices at Pathfinder House once they had been completed.

In response to a question by a Member regarding energy consumption, it was explained that the increases reported were mainly attributable to the Leisure Centres but that improvements to

the Centres were likely to reduce their energy consumption owing to improved building techniques. It was also anticipated that the implementation of the Council's Energy Efficiency Strategy would produce improvements in energy efficiency. Members suggested that opportunities to introduce further energy efficiency measures should be explored but they stressed that this should take account of the full environmental cost of construction and running facilities. The Estates and Property Manager undertook to provide Members with more information on this subject.

Following a further question on the level of grant funding available through the Community Assets Fund, Members were advised that the Council currently had no suitable projects that would qualify for grant aid from the Fund; however, applications would be made to other sources for funding to improve Council assets.

Members noted the asset management achievements during 2008/09, which included the opening of Block D, Pathfinder House, the completion of the Creative Exchange and the construction of an extension to the Café at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park. Having been informed that delays by the Land Registry had meant that work to introduce a corporate database containing information relating to property ownership and asset management had not yet been completed, it was

RESOLVED

that the report be endorsed for submission to the Cabinet.

## **65. SAPLEY EAST - PROPERTY TRANSACTIONS**

The Panel was acquainted by way of a report by the Heads of Law, Property and Governance and of Financial Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) with proposals for property transactions that would be required to achieve the approved Masterplan for Sapley East as part of the overall regeneration of Oxmoor.

Members were reminded that, following the outcome of public consultations on various options, the Cabinet had approved proposals for the development of land east of Sapley Square, Huntingdon. The property transactions identified in the report were required in order for the work, which formed the final phase of the regeneration, to be completed. Members were advised that the Council had agreed that any income from its land interests in the area would be reinvested in Oxmoor.

It was reported that key elements of the scheme included the development of a Community Enterprise Centre (CEC) and redevelopment of parts of the Luminus site. For this to be achieved the two faith buildings on the site would have to be relocated and the site of the public house would probably have to be obtained. Members were informed that development would be phased to coincide with progress of the negotiations.

The Panel was advised that a part of a partnership agreement with the Council, Hunts Forum had submitted a bid for grant funding

towards the CEC, which would comprise a learning centre, a furniture recycling initiative and meeting rooms and offices for community organisations. In response to a question concerning the viability of the centre should the bid be unsuccessful, Members were advised that failure of the bid was unlikely but that, should this occur, income from land sales could be used for the project or, subject to the returns achievable, borrowing would be considered. Alternatively, there would also be the option of delaying the project until land values increased. Following a further question, Members were informed that a service level agreement with Hunts Forum would be introduced for the use of the building. Having requested information on future plans for the bridge over Nene Road, it was

RESOLVED

that the report be endorsed for submission to the Cabinet.

**66. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMIC WELL BEING) PROGRESS REPORT**

In considering a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the Panel's current programme of studies, it was noted that information on the effects of the night-time economy on health and health services would be presented at the next meeting, that the Corporate Plan Working Group would be continuing its investigations later that month and that reports on the costs associated with Standards and on the Council's management of capital projects were expected at the April meeting.

**67. WORKPLAN STUDIES**

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) containing details of the studies being undertaken by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

**68. SCRUTINY**

The Panel received and noted the latest edition of the Decision Digest.

Chairman