
Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being)

**Report of the meetings held on 1st December 2009,
5th January and 2nd February 2010**

Matters for Information

**36. AGEING WELL IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE –
OLDER PEOPLES' HOUSING STRATEGY**

Prior to its submission to the Cabinet (Item No. 57 of their Report refers), the Panel has reviewed the draft Older Peoples' Housing Strategy entitled "Ageing Well in Huntingdonshire: Housing and Healthy Ageing for Older People 2009 – 2014", which has been produced in partnership with NHS Cambridgeshire.

The Panel's attention has been drawn to the Strategy's objectives, which focus on four key areas namely: providing support to older people, undertaking home adaptations, employing more energy efficient measures within homes and providing "extra care" services to the elderly. The latter refers to sheltered accommodation for older people and includes a range of communal facilities and 24 hour nursing care provided by the Primary Care Trust. However, a limited level of this type of support is available across the District, particularly when compared to the level of demand. Whilst it is costly, it is more affordable than other alternatives.

The Panel has discussed a number of matters, including the figures on the changing age profile of Huntingdonshire, the level of service provided by Occupational Therapists within the District, the affordability of home adaptations, the locality of sheltered accommodation and whether the age of individuals covered by the Strategy should be increased to 75+ years. Comment also has been made on the low level of accommodation available to elderly couples.

The Panel has been informed that the Executive Councillor for Housing and Public Health is currently in discussion with the Primary Care Trust and Cambridgeshire Community Services on the Occupational Therapy service. The Notes of these meetings, together with the Terms of Reference for the Working Group established to look at this issue have been circulated to the Panel for their information.

37. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

In conjunction with the Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Panels for Environmental Well-Being and for Economic Well-Being, the Panel for Social Well-Being has reviewed the Council's performance against its priority objectives, which are contained in "Growing Success" - the Corporate Plan. The Panel has endorsed the views of the Corporate Plan Working Group, particularly with regard to the objectives where targets have not been achieved. Members also have noted that the Working Group's investigations into the budgets associated with each of the priority objectives are continuing.

The Panel has discussed housing trends and, specifically, those relating to the number of households living in temporary accommodation in the context of current economic trends and the impact they have had on demand for housing advice and services. Members have been advised that the Council might achieve its annual target if grant becomes available for new housing in the same way as it did last year. With regard to the development of social housing in the year to date, Members have acknowledged the difficulties experienced by developers selling affordable homes through the Government's Shared Ownership scheme. This has, in the past, been used to cross-subsidise the cost of social housing and the lower than hoped for sales have meant that fewer social houses have been built than might otherwise have been the case.

The Panel also has discussed the levels of people experiencing arts interventions and of budget available to the Leisure Centres for promotional and marketing purpose. Members' comments on the conclusions reached have been passed to the Cabinet.

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

The Panel has received details of a consultation exercise being undertaken by NHS Cambridgeshire on the future of primary care out-of-hours services for residents in Cambridgeshire. Members have agreed to submit their own individual responses to the consultation.

39. FUTURE GOVERNANCE OF HINCHINGBROOKE HOSPITAL

The Panel has reviewed 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. In so doing it has been confirmed that details of the car parking management contract will be included within the franchise for the governance of the Hospital and that a request has been made to the Chairman of the Stakeholder Panel for the franchise bids to be considered in a private session. Members have reiterated their concern that the Strategic Health Authority might select the franchisee that undertakes to pay off the largest proportion of the Hospital's debt rather than the one that will provide the best level of health care.

Attention has been drawn to the opportunity that exists for the public to comment on the proposals. Members have questioned whether the public will be able to influence the process given the type of questions being posed within the newsletter. In that light, Members have agreed to submit their own comments to the Stakeholder Panel.

40. OVERVIEW OF NEW WEBSITE – FEATURES AND BENEFITS

A presentation on the Council's new website has been received, which highlighted the improvements and enhancements that have been introduced following the completion of Phase I of the project to transfer the existing system over to a new technical infrastructure. Over 2000 online documents and 80 forms are available to users of the website, which attracts in excess of 2000 visitors per day. Financial aspects of the development of the website and of undertaking electronic transactions compared with face-to-face services have been reported. The introduction of online facilities has resulted in significant cost savings for the Council.

A soft launch of the website will take place in January prior to the main launch in February. Phase II of the upgrade, to include more new features and the ability for users to personalise the way the website operates, will continue throughout 2011.

41. IMPROVEMENTS TO KERBSIDE RECYCLING SERVICES

The Panel has expressed its views to the Cabinet (Item No. 64 of their Report refers) on a proposal to extend the current kerbside recycling service to include the collection of glass bottles and containers. The proposal has been prompted by advances in technology, changes in market conditions and the fact that the Council's waste processing contract expired in December 2009. The new contractual arrangements could potentially save the Council £300,000 annually.

As part of the proposals, existing glass recycling banks will be replaced by new banks and the service will be extended to include the collection of a different range of recyclable materials to be managed by third sector organisations. A proportion of the recycling credits will continue to be paid to Parishes when the new arrangements are in place.

The Panel has commented on the health and safety and practical implications of introducing kerbside glass collections and the impact of the proposals on the general repair and maintenance costs associated with the Council's vehicles. Members have not supported a proposal to charge residents for additional recycling bins; however, they are in favour of charging developers for the provision of all bins in new developments.

42. CARE QUALITY COMMISSION

The Panel has received details of the outcome of a meeting between Councillor R J West and Ms B Skinner of the Care Quality Commission. Members have been reminded that the District Council is subject to inspection via the County Council as it contributes towards some of their services. Generally, the Commission's assessments focus on the outcomes that have been delivered by service providers and not the processes that providers have in place.

An invitation from the Commission will be extended to Members to attend a briefing on involving Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Local Involvement Networks (LINK's) in the Commission's work.

43. DISABILITY ACCESS STUDY - UPDATE

Members have received an update on progress against the actions that have arisen from the Panel's previous study into disability access across the District. A response from Cambridgeshire County Council in respect of blue badge parking has been received, which confirms that should civil parking enforcement be extended across the County, the enforcement regime would include measures to address the misuse of blue badge parking and parking in spaces allocated to disabled drivers by unauthorised users.

Town and Parish Councils will be informed of the outcome of the study and they will be reminded that the Neighbourhood Forums are now the most appropriate body to whom to report such issues to in the future.

44. STUDY – PARKING AT HINCHINGBROOKE HOSPITAL

In pursuit of the study on parking at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital, the Panel has received a presentation from the Facilities Business Manager for the Hospital on the operation of the car parks and the action taken to review the parking policy. Members have been informed that a Working Group comprising representatives from Cambridgeshire LINK, employees and the public has been established to undertake the review. Proposals for changes considered thus far include the provision of an additional 40 spaces for employees and 20 spaces at the front of the main entrance to extend the current pick up/drop off point and disabled parking provision. It has further been proposed that the charge for the shortest period of stay should be changed to £2 for 2 hours with the charge rising by £1 for every hour thereafter. Charges currently generate in the region of £500,000 for the Hospital each year, of which £30,000 is paid to a contractor to manage the car parks. The remaining funds are utilised by the Hospital for car parking maintenance and essential medical services.

Discussion has taken place on a number of matters including the possibility of introducing a pay upon exit system, alternative charging schemes, concessionary passes, the role of the contractor, the impact of parking on the surrounding streets, the Hospital's Green

Transport Plan, the possibility of introducing a Shuttle Bus system and the impact of the Hospital's future governance arrangements on the current car parking management contract.

The Panel has concluded that the Hospital should consider further reducing the length of the shortest stay by introducing an additional charging option of £1 for the first hour and that more drop-off spaces should be provided. A further suggestion is that cheaper ways of enabling visitors to pay on leaving the Hospital should be explored. Members also are of the view that further investigation should be undertaken into alternative ways that a Shuttle Bus service to the Hospital might be achieved. A report by the Panel on these points and other findings in the course of the study will be sent to the Hospital's Senior Executive Group at the end of February for inclusion as part of their deliberations.

45. PETITION – HILL RISE PARK, ST IVES

Pursuant to Item No. 30 of the Report to Council on 2nd December 2009, a petition signed by 16 people has been presented to the Panel drawing attention to nuisance caused by anti-social drivers late at night in Hill Rise Park, St Ives. The petition has been referred via the Community Safety Partnership to the St Ives Neighbourhood Forum. This has resulted in the area being adopted as a Policing Priority at the Neighbourhood Forum. On the basis of previous experience of similar problems in St Neots, a number of suggestions to resolve the nuisance caused also has been proposed and endorsed by the Panel. These include adopting a zero tolerance policy coupled with issuing fixed penalty notices for anti-social vehicle use in the area, installing CCTV cameras on site with a direct voice link from the CCTV control room, introducing speed restrictions in the car park and programming the lights at the Skate Park to turn off by a designated time. A report on progress has been requested for 6 months time.

**46. MONITORING OF SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS
(PLANNING OBLIGATIONS)**

The Panel has been updated on the receipt and expenditure by the Council of money negotiated under Section 106 Agreements. Having confirmed that the Panel's role will be to scrutinise the progress of allocated schemes and maintenance, Members have decided that they should pay particular attention to those Agreements that were completed earliest. Greater details on progress of these schemes have been requested for inclusion in the next monitoring report.

47. PLAY FACILITIES WORKING GROUP

The Panel has received an update on the latest investigations by the Play Facilities Working Group. From the options available, the Working Group has concluded that a funding arrangement should be offered to Parishes to assist with their facilities' revenue costs based on a 40-40-20% split between the District Council, Parish Council and users of the facilities respectively. Facilities that would qualify under the scheme are skateboard ramps and multi-use games areas. The

proposal has already been discussed with the Executive Councillor for Operational and Countryside Services.

The Working Group has analysed the financial implications of the proposal. The cost to the District Council is likely to amount to an average of £800 per facility. It is suggested that only one parish council should be permitted to enter into this arrangement per year. It is clear that a Medium Term Plan bid will need to be submitted to the Cabinet for this purpose. Investigations also are being undertaken into whether the Council can co-ordinate insurance for Parishes wishing to insure their facilities under a group scheme. The aim is to achieve lower premiums for the Parishes. Councillors P G Mitchell and R J West have been nominated to present the findings of the study to the Cabinet.

48. INDEPENDENT SCRUTINY PANEL MEMBERS

The Panel has delegated authority to the Appointments Panel to make recommendations to the Council on the appointment of two Independent Members to the Panel.

49. CAMBRIDGESHIRE HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Panel has received an update on matters currently being considered by the Cambridgeshire Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee. The Committee has appointed a Working Group to consider issues surrounding the future governance of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital, to which Councillor R J West has been appointed. The principle that the Hospital's services should be maintained at the same level as those provided in 2007 has been endorsed by the Working Group. Concern has also been expressed at the lack of continuity in the Strategic Health Authority Officers who attend the Working Group's meetings, which it is felt is impeding investigations. Councillor West will provide a report on the Working Group's meeting on 4th February at the Panel's next meeting.

Other Matters of Interest

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

The Panel has reviewed its programme of studies at each of its meetings. It having been reported that Fenland and South Cambridgeshire District Councils have expressed reluctance to use focus groups to investigate matters raised by The Place Survey, Members have stated their wish to see that steps are taken to address those areas identified as needing improvement in Huntingdonshire.

In respect of Town Centre Cleaning, the Panel has been advised that a new Operations Manager has been appointed and that she commenced her duties on 18th January 2010. One of her tasks will be to investigate the recommendations made following a previous study on this subject.

Members have agreed to submit a response to an NHS consultation on a proposal to include new patient rights within the NHS Constitution. It is felt that the proposed rights should already be an integral part of the service. Clarification of the processes to be implemented and the means of assessing and benchmarking them has also been sought.

51. WORK PLAN STUDIES

The Panel has reviewed its work plan and received details of studies being undertaken by the other Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

52. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 – FORWARD PLAN

The Panel has been acquainted with details of the current Forward Plan of Key Decisions. Items entitled Rural Strategy – Cambridgeshire ACRE and Housing Enforcement Powers will be considered at the Panel's meetings in March and April 2010 respectively.

53. SCRUTINY

The Panel has considered the latest editions of the Decision Digest and discussed matters contained therein.

S J Criswell
Chairman