
Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being)

Report of the meeting held on 9th February 2010

Matters for Information

45. CARBON FOOTPRINT REDUCTION

Following the discussion at the Council meeting held on 2nd December 2009, the Panel has received an update from the Executive Councillor for Environment and Information Technology and the Head of Environmental Management on actions being undertaken by the Council to address the need to reduce carbon emissions.

As 30% of the District's emissions are attributable to the housing stock, the Panel has been advised that the Council is working in conjunction with Cambridgeshire Horizons and Renewables East with a view to establishing a carbon offset fund whereby developers pay a levy to contributing towards the retro fitting of the existing housing stock.

As the Council's resources are limited and the widespread implementation of carbon reduction schemes costly, the Panel has been advised that the Council hope to access external funding to deliver projects. However the preparation of bids is time consuming and there is strong competition for the funding available.

The Panel has questioned whether a relatively low cost scheme could be introduced to arrange for libraries to loan smart meters to residents so that they can monitor their own energy usage. However the Panel was informed that it is the view of the Executive Councillor that the current extension of the "Watts Going Down" scheme to other villages is likely to become more effective. The Panel also has questioned whether the Council could offer reduced fees for planning applications for the use of renewable energy sources, but has been informed that planning fees are set nationally and any reduction could only be achieved by way of a subsidy by the Council itself.

In recognising the importance of the subject, the Panel has requested that the Executive Councillor for Environment and Information Technology and the Head of Environmental Management attend the Panel meeting in June 2010 to provide

a further update on progress made on carbon reduction measures.

46. CAR PARKING REVIEW UPDATE

Following the earlier consideration of a report on the Car Parking Review in November 2009, the Panel has considered the findings of a further meeting of the Car Parking Review Working Group which was convened to discuss the operational issues of introducing an area of free car parking for recreational use at the Riverside Car Park, St. Neots.

Members have raised concerns over the possible implications of introducing charging in the car park in view of a recent reduction in the footfall in St. Neots and traffic congestion in the town. The Panel is of the opinion that the implementation of parking charges at the Riverside Park will further exacerbate these issues and increase air pollution in the town centre. The Panel therefore has invited the Cabinet to consider allowing three hours free parking in the whole of the Riverside Car Park which will benefit shoppers who wish to park there and those who want to use the park for leisure and recreational purposes. The Panel has suggested that an appropriate charge be set for those who park longer than three hours with payment on exit which may reduce enforcement costs.

47. REVISED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

The Panel has endorsed a report on the changes proposed to the Local Development Scheme arising from new regulations on the development plan document production and the required content of a local development scheme. The Panel also has noted a need to amend the anticipated timetable for production of various development plan documents since adoption of the core strategy.

48. DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT DPD – PROPOSED SUBMISSION

Following the earlier consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) of a report on the Development of Options for the Development Management DPD in December 2008, the Panel has considered the proposed submission Development Management DPD which has been prepared following consultation on the development of options between 30th January and 30th March 2009. Key stakeholder consultation also has taken place between 18th December 2009 and 11th January 2010 on the draft proposed submission document.

In response to concerns raised over the adverse effects on carriageway congestion and parking on verges as a result of car parking allocations on new developments, the Panel has been advised that the Council has to conform to national

parking standards, although the standards set by the Council are slightly higher and the Council is liaising with the County Council on design guidance in an effort to improve the situation.

When considering the Development of Options stage of the DPD, the Panel had proposed that the wording of policy E6 was unduly prescriptive by stating that planning permission for development will be granted for proposals which will deliver the implementation of the Great Fen Project. Doubts also had been expressed about the proposed withdrawal of permitted development rights for specific farming or operational purposes in the Great Fen area which could disadvantage local land owners. In answer to questions as to why changes had not been made to the submission document to reflect the Panel's concerns, Members have been informed that the Government Officer has instructed local planning authorities to be precise when wording policies to avoid the possibility of doubt. In addition, the Panel was pleased to note that where permitted development rights had been removed, no charge was made for any planning application that would otherwise not have been required.

The Cabinet has therefore been informed that the Panel has no specific comments on the Development Management DPD - Proposed Submission.

49. INDEPENDENT SCRUTINY PANEL MEMBERS

The Selection Panel's recommendations for the appointment of two independent members to the Panel have been endorsed. A separate item relating to this matter appears elsewhere on the Council agenda.

50. WORKPLAN STUDIES

The Panel has been advised that the final report of the Development Management Process Working Group will be available for the next meeting at which time Members will also consider possible topics for future studies.

**51. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL
(ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING) PROGRESS**

The Panel has been advised that progress on issues that had been previously discussed.

The Transportation Team Leader has updated Members on the situation with regard to HCV parking in the District. The Panel has been advised that the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport has responded on behalf of the District Council to the HCV Advisory Route Network public consultation. The HCV parking facility at Alconbury has re-opened and, as part of the A14 proposals, the Council will continue to look for

the provision of HCV parking facilities or the expansion of existing facilities within the District.

Having regard to a question raised by a Member at an earlier meeting about the cost of the Council's website, a detailed answer has been provided to the Panel's satisfaction.

52. SCRUTINY

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

Members have requested further information on the implications of the changes to kerbside recycling services.

P M D Godfrey
Chairman