
Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being)

**Report of the meetings held on 2nd and
9th March 2010**

Matters for Information

53. CAR PARKING REVIEW UPDATE

Following publication of the Cabinet's decision on 11th February 2010 regarding the Car Parking Review, the Panel called-in the matter for further consideration. The Panel had earlier submitted alternative proposals that the Cabinet had not accepted, and at the Panel's invitation Councillors D B Dew and T D Sanderson as the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport and Chairman of the Car Parking Working Party respectively, attended the meeting when the call-in was discussed.

The Panel was concerned that the Cabinet's decision to provide 38 spaces offering two hours free parking in a demarcated area of Riverside Car Park for leisure usage could result in the free spaces being dominated by shoppers, which would reduce their availability for those wanting to use the park for leisure and recreational purposes. Members acknowledged that there was no way in which use of the proposed free spaces could be restricted to park users. Members suggested that 38 spaces is insufficient for a free period for parking and that two hours is not long enough before charging begins, either for users of the park or those who wish to walk into the town.

The Panel agreed to refer back the decisions of the Cabinet on the car parking review to the Cabinet for further consideration. The Panel has suggested that the Cabinet re-consider allowing three hours free parking in the whole of the Riverside Car Park which will benefit those who wish to park there for short periods and assist those who want to use the park for leisure and recreational purposes. The Panel suggested that a charge be set in line with that proposed for the car park at Cambridge Street for those who park longer than three hours.

The Panel's deliberations were considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 16th March 2010, details of which are set out in its report to this meeting.

54. DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PROCESS WORKING GROUP

The Panel has received the final report of its Working Group which had been established to investigate the process for the determination of planning applications and make recommendations where appropriate. In doing so, the Panel has acknowledged that development management is a contentious subject, which by its nature, can generate strong feelings and concerns which can influence the views of users of the service. The Working Group has found overall that the development management process works well in Huntingdonshire but felt that the treatment of amendments to applications and communication between case officers and residents could benefit from further improvement.

The Panel subsequently approved the following recommendations for submission to the Cabinet and the Development Management Panel:-

- (a) that the possibility of charging developers for pre-submission advice be investigated further by the Council;
- (b) that relevant consultees and neighbours be consulted again on amended plans, except for those of very minor significance, with a seven days deadline for reply;
- (c) that care is required by officers to ensure that all of those households that abut a development site, as a minimum, be sent a consultee letter and that the envelope be overprinted with a suitable message to indicate that it is an important communication concerning a planning application;
- (d) that applicants be advised in the clearest terms at the outset of the process that they are unlikely to receive any further communication until all of the consultees' views have been received, which could be towards the end of the eight or thirteen weeks determination period;
- (e) that further training be made available for town and parish councils on all aspects of the development management process;
- (f) that when the public speaking procedure at the Development Management Panel is next reviewed, consideration be given to the introduction of a mechanism that allows external speakers to respond to what they perceive to be factually incorrect information so that the Panel can make well informed decisions;
- (g) that the Council reinforces the message wherever possible that development that takes place without permission is discouraged and that the Council will take a robust approach concerning the retention of development where permission is subsequently refused.

The Panel has requested to be notified of the Cabinet's response to the report by June 2010.

55. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Council's performance against the environmental well-being targets within the corporate plan "Growing Success" has been reviewed by the Panel.

Having had their attention drawn to the Council's position in relation to the Making Cambridgeshire Count initiative, the Panel has requested the Leader of the Council and the Director of Central Services to attend its next meeting to provide an update on the Council's involvement in the programme.

56. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 - FORWARD PLAN

The Panel has been acquainted with details of the Forward Plan of forthcoming decisions prepared by the Leader of the Council.

57. WORK PLAN STUDIES

Having previously suggested planning enforcement as a possible topic for a future study, the Panel has received a report summarising the Council's enforcement activity for 2009. As a result, the Panel is satisfied that enforcement activity is sufficiently monitored by Members and has discounted this as a potential study subject. Members have suggested flood protection measures in Huntingdonshire and land use for agricultural purposes in the context of planning policies and its contribution to the local economy, as possible subjects for future studies.

The Panel has requested information showing the waste disposal arrangements for the District.

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

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

Councillor Mrs M Banerjee has been appointed as a substitute member to the Joint Accountability Committee.

59. SCRUTINY

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

P M D Godfrey
Chairman