
Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being)

**Report of the meeting held on 13th April and
8th June 2010**

Matters for Information

1. MASTERPLAN FOR THE GREAT FEN

Following the earlier consideration of the draft plan, the Panel has received a report on the Great Fen Masterplan which has been approved by the Project Steering Committee, and represents the spatial plan of how the project is anticipated to develop.

The Panel has been advised that the Council's financial exposure to the project is limited by the collaboration agreement that has been signed with the other partners, although the Council can withdraw from the Steering Committee at any time.

The Panel has been advised that the loan approved by the Cabinet to the Wildlife Trust is a commercial business decision between partners with shared objectives. The loan will be used to purchase land which will help fulfil the District Council's objectives and aspects of the Masterplan and is subject to satisfactory security.

Members have been informed that further detailed work will be undertaken to produce action plans by the partners and that it is for the partners to satisfy themselves as to the business and financial planning of those aspects of the Great Fen on which they will be leading. There is therefore no overall business plan for the project as a whole.

The Panel have agreed to a suggestion that a site visit to the Great Fen be convened with representatives of partner groups and the Project Manager present to enable Members to view how the land is being managed and to discuss the project with partners.

Members have also requested bi-annual reports from the Director of Environmental and Community Services on the progress of the Great Fen project and details as to the cost of the Council's involvement in the project by way of office time.

The views of the Panel have been passed to the Cabinet for its consideration.

2. 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.

3. CABINET FEEDBACK

Members have noted reports from the Cabinet in response to the Panel's recommendations on the Car Park Review 2009 and the Development Management Process.

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

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

Members have been encouraged to note that progress has been made on the Perry Village Cycle Route, with route options due to be considered at the next Huntingdonshire Traffic Management Area Joint Committee meeting.

5. RAMSEY MARKET TOWN TRANSPORT STRATEGY

The Panel has considered a report seeking approval of the first Ramsey Market Town Transport Strategy which has been devised in conjunction with the Huntingdonshire Traffic Management Area Joint Committee. The strategy identifies the key transport issues facing Ramsey and outlines a programme of transport schemes to address the transport needs of the town and surrounding villages over the next five years. Projects within the strategy will be funded from a variety of different sources, with the strategy providing the evidence base required to request contributions from developers. However the majority of funding will be required from the County Council as the highway authority which will also be responsible for the maintenance of the improvements that are made.

The Panel has acknowledged that on-street parking is a particular concern in Ramsey as it slows traffic and can make junctions more difficult to negotiate. This is exacerbated by a lack of enforcement of illegal parking which might be addressed by forthcoming proposals on civil parking enforcement.

Members have questioned the extent to which the proposed strategy could be funded via Section 106 contributions from the recent Tesco development in Ramsey. However the principal contribution would have been the provision of traffic signals at the High Street/Great Whyte junction which has not been supported by the Huntingdonshire Traffic Management Area Joint Committee.

The Panel has endorsed the report for submission to the Cabinet.

6. CAR PARKING ORDERS

Following consideration of reports on car parking in February and March 2010, the Panel has considered a further report summarising the public response to the advertisement of proposals to introduce new Orders governing the use of car parks operated by the Council. Members have also been acquainted with details of the financial impacts of the approved MTP, in the context of income from the fees for parking at Riverside Park, St Neots with 38 spaces free of charge for 2 hours, as well as the alternative scenario suggested by the Panel of all spaces at Riverside Park being free for 3 hours.

Having regard to the proposed introduction of parking charges at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, Members have recognised that the car park is being used by motorists working and visiting the nearby hospital and commuting via the railway station. With that in mind, the Panel has drawn attention to the need to ensure that membership of the Friends of the Country Park is not used simply as a way of enabling motorists to continue to park at the country park without charge.

The Panel has noted the responses received which oppose the introduction of charges at Riverside Park, St Neots. In view of the level of publicity that this matter has generated in the local press, Members have acknowledged that there has been ample opportunity for members of the public to comment. The Panel therefore see no reason why a local inquiry should be required to explore the objections raised in greater detail which, in Members' opinion, would only add further delay and cost to the process.

Members of the Panel have expressed some sympathy with the views expressed by the public but also recognise the need for the Council to generate additional income to meet the anticipated shortfall in the Council's budget.

The Panel therefore has recommended that the Cabinet considers the objections received and determines the Orders without holding a local inquiry.

7. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The Council's performance against the environmental well-being targets within the Corporate Plan "Growing Success" has been reviewed by the Panel. The Panel has requested details as to the amount of CO2 saved through moving into the Council's new headquarters.

8. WORK PLAN STUDIES

Having previously suggested waste disposal as a possible topic for a future study, the Panel has received a summary of waste disposal arrangements for the District. As a result, the Panel has requested

further information on future plans for waste disposal and the costs associated with these plans.

Following further consideration of topics for detailed investigation the Panel has appointed Councillors M G Baker, P Godley, D Harty and Messrs D Hopkins and M Phillips to a working group to investigate the subject of planning conservation.

9. SCRUTINY

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

P M D Godfrey
Chairman