

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SOCIAL WELL-BEING) held in the CIVIC SUITE 0.1A, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 5 October 2010.

PRESENT: Councillor R J West – Vice-Chairman in the Chair.

Councillors S Cawley, B S Chapman, Mrs K E Cooper and P D Reeve.

R Coxhead and Mrs M Nicholas.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors P L E Bucknell, S J Criswell, J J Dutton, Mrs P A Jordan and P G Mitchell.

39. MEMBERSHIP OF THE PANEL

The Chairman welcomed Councillor P D Reeve to his first meeting of the Panel. In so doing, he placed on record his gratitude for the contribution made by Councillor A Monk to the work of the Panel.

40. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 7th September 2010 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

41. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor P D Reeve declared a personal interest in Minute No. 45 by virtue of his membership of Cambridgeshire County Council, Ramsey Town Council and the Ramsey Initiative.

42. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000: FORWARD PLAN

The Panel considered and noted 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 1st October 2010 to 31st January 2011. Members requested sight of the item entitled Cambridgeshire Local Investment Plan prior to its consideration by the Cabinet.

43. STUDY: CONSULTATION PROCESSES

With the aid of a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel were provided with an opportunity to plan their study on the Council's consultation processes with a view to determining whether the approach currently taken to consultation was suitable and consistent across the authority.

In reviewing the Consultation and Engagement Strategy and associated Guidance, the Panel received a list of consultations that had previously been undertaken by the Council together with the outcome of a recent consultation which suggested that approximately half of respondents felt that the Council did not listen to or consider the views of local residents. Members doubted whether this finding was representative of views generally in the District. It did, however, suggest there might be justification for the study.

Members discussed a number of matters including the role of pressure groups during consultation exercises, public perceptions of the consultation process and the need to publicise more effectively the expectations of consultations prior to their commencement. It was also felt that the Council should explain to the public the reasons why a chosen course of action was taken following a consultation exercise. Comment was also made on the structure of the questions posed within consultation documents and the importance of using consultation to support the role of Councillors in their decision-making and in engaging with their constituents. Furthermore, Members commented that the Neighbourhood Forums could be more effectively utilised to promote current and forthcoming consultations. Other matters that were discussed included the importance of communication and its ability to ensure consultations incorporated all sectors of the community including those in isolated rural areas, the prescriptive nature of some consultations and the need to analyse data on a Ward specific basis. It was agreed that a copy of the Council's Communications Strategy should be circulated electronically to Members for background purposes.

The view was expressed that there should be rigorous assessment of whether consultations were justified prior to their commencement and that when they had been concluded the effectiveness of consultations should be reviewed. It was also suggested that the format of the District Wide publication might need to be reconsidered. Having referred to the study's strategic links to the Council's Corporate Plan, the Scrutiny and Review Manager indicated that he would circulate a completed study template to Members in advance of the next Panel meeting.

44. HUNTINGDONSHIRE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLES THEMATIC GROUP

With the assistance of an extract from the Huntingdonshire Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2028 (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel were acquainted with the work of the Children and Young People Thematic Group of the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership (HSP), together with details of how it intended to achieve its objectives. Having been reminded of the duty on the Council to scrutinise the work of the HSP, Members noted that the Thematic Group aimed to ensure that sustained support for families and carers would be available across the District.

The Panel's attention was drawn to the latest report of the Thematic Group, which included its terms of reference, membership and current matters under consideration. Having received details of the Thematic Group's current achievements and the risks to its work, Members

queried whether the Police and Primary Schools were providing the Thematic Group with adequate support. Comment also was made that the data being used by the Thematic Group was out of date.

In discussing the work of the Thematic Group, it was suggested by a Member that some priority should be accorded to reviewing the Council's role in shaping new residential developments. Owing to a perceived shortfall in the availability of facilities for some sectors of new and developing communities, it was felt that the review would provide some lessons for the future.

To assist them in scrutinising the Thematic Group, the Panel has requested that the latest report of its meeting held on 30th September 2010 was circulated, together with an update on progress of its Action Plan, which was currently in the development stages. It was further agreed to invite the relevant Executive Member to a future meeting to discuss the Thematic Group's work.

The Chairman drew attention to a Member led review being undertaken by the County Council's Children and Young Peoples Services Committee on integrating children and young peoples services and social infrastructure provision into the County's new communities. It was agreed that copies of the report on the review should be circulated electronically to Members.

45. NHS CONSULTATION: PHARMACEUTICAL SERVICES IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE

With the assistance of a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel were acquainted with details of a consultation exercise being undertaken by NHS Cambridgeshire on pharmaceutical services in Cambridgeshire. The purpose of the consultation was to seek views on the range and quality of pharmaceutical services, the times during which they were available, their location and any other aspect of the services.

A further report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services (a copy of which is also appended in the Minute Book) drew the Panel's attention to a number of other matters for consideration relating to pharmaceutical services. Members noted that the consultation was intended to inform the Primary Care Trust's Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA), which it was required to complete by 1st February 2011.

The Panel discussed the design of the consultation document and its distribution. Members queried whether all sectors of the community had been adequately targeted and they highlighted in particular the need for copies to be made available in existing pharmacies so that current users of the service had sufficient opportunity to respond. Although the questionnaire requested equalities monitoring information, the Panel suggested that it might also be useful for future NHS consultations to include details of where respondents lived to provide a better understanding of local need.

Having regard to the questions raised by the consultation, Members queried the value of the information that would be gained from

responses to them. Comment was also made on the Government's plans to enhance the role of existing pharmacies and the implications they would have for these facilities. Members' attention was drawn to the facts that the PCT was required to contribute £40,000 in establishment payments to each pharmacy per year and that the PNA would enable the Primary Care Trust to manage the number of pharmaceutical outlets in Cambridgeshire.

In noting that responses to the consultation would be required by 25th November 2010, it was

RESOLVED

that a response to the consultation on pharmaceutical services in Cambridgeshire be submitted to NHS Cambridgeshire to include the Panel's comments as set out above.

46. CAMBRIDGESHIRE ADULTS WELLBEING AND HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chairman updated the Panel on matters currently being considered by the Cambridgeshire Adults Well-Being and Health Scrutiny Committee, including the Government's proposals to reform the NHS outlined within the "Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS" White Paper, adult support services, training on dementia for care home staff and the membership of the neo-natal intensive care joint committee.

47. WORK PLAN 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 studies currently being undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels. Members were encouraged to contact the Scrutiny and Review Manager directly if they were interested in participating in any of the other Overview and Scrutiny Panels' studies.

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

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) which contained details of actions taken in response to recent discussions and decisions. Having regard to the future governance of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital, the Vice-Chairman reported that an announcement by the Strategic Health Authority on which bidder would take over the Hospital's management was anticipated shortly.

Members noted that a further report on the Provision of Play Facilities would be submitted to their next meeting and that the Section 106 Agreement Advisory Group, at their meeting on 11th October 2010, would consider the Panel's proposal to develop project plans for schemes to be delivered through S106 Agreements.

49. SCRUTINY

In scrutinising the 107th Edition of the digest of decisions taken by the Cabinet and the other Panels, etc, and following a question on the item on the Provision of Play Facilities in Huntingdonshire, the Scrutiny and Review Manager undertook to send details of a group insurance scheme for third tier authorities to Councillor P D Reeve.

Chairman