

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, 4 January 2011.

PRESENT: Councillor R J West – Vice-Chairman.

Councillors P L E Bucknell, S Cawley,
B S Chapman, Mrs K E Cooper,
Mrs P A Jordan and P G Mitchell.

Co-opted Members - Mr R Coxhead and Mrs M Nicholas.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors S J Criswell and J J Dutton.

75. MINUTES

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

76. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor P L E Bucknell declared a personal interest in Minute No. 78 by virtue of his involvement with the Police Authority.

Councillor P G Mitchell declared a personal interest in Minute No. 78 by virtue of his involvement in the installation of CCTV cameras in Stilton.

77. 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 January to 30th April 2011. In noting the addition of items entitled Local Lettings Plans and Safer Homes Scheme, the Scrutiny and Review Manager reported on the background to the reports, both of which would be considered by the Cabinet at their January meeting.

78. HUNTINGDONSHIRE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP VIEWS ON CCTV

(Councillor C R Hyams, Executive Councillor for Operational and Countryside Services was in attendance for consideration of this item).

Pursuant to Minute No. 68, the Panel gave consideration to a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) outlining Huntingdonshire Community Safety Partnership's discussions on the value of CCTV within the

District.

Dr S Lammin, Chairman of the Community Safety Partnership, reported that the Divisional Commander for Central Division had written to her outlining Cambridgeshire Constabulary's position in response to the Council's proposals. Members noted that the Constabulary strongly supported the retention of the CCTV service and were willing to engage in discussions with the Council with a view to preserving it. Attention was also drawn to a letter which had been received from St Ives Town Council requesting the Council to reconsider its budgetary proposals in respect of CCTV.

Members discussed a number of matters including the extent to which CCTV affected crime levels particularly in rural areas, the Council's statutory duty to reduce crime and disorder, research findings on the effectiveness of CCTV, the Council's policy in respect of the installation of cameras within the District and the process by which crime incidents detected through CCTV were recorded.

Having considered the value of CCTV to the District, Members have concluded with the view that the service should be preserved, particularly in light of the level of investment already made by the Council in it. Comment was also made by a Member that efforts should be made to collaborate with other local authorities and external parties with a view to determining whether they might be interested in buying into the CCTV system. The views also were expressed that the availability of external funding should not be the deciding factor when a decision on the future of CCTV was taken and that savings should be found in other areas.

Having concluded their discussions, Members noted that an opportunity to give further consideration to the proposals would be provided at the February meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) when the final budget would be considered by Members.

79. HUNTINGDONSHIRE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP: HEALTH AND WELL-BEING 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 strategic objectives of the Health and Well-Being Thematic Group of the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership (HSP), together with details of how it intended to achieve them. Having been reminded of the duty the Council had to scrutinise the work of the HSP, Members noted that the Thematic Group aimed to address health inequalities, intervene to alter situations that had negative health impacts, promote healthy lifestyles, ensure homes were well maintained and provide and promote opportunities for active leisure and cultural activities.

The Panel's attention was drawn to the latest report of the Thematic Group, which contained its terms of reference, membership and current matters under consideration. Members discussed progress with the achievement of the Action Plan for the July – September 2010 period and received an explanation as to why targets relating to the number of people in Huntingdonshire who quit smoking after 4

weeks and the number of 15-24 year old persons screened or tested for Chlamydia had not been achieved. They also discussed the problems externally imposed targets presented for the Thematic Group. Having regard to the objective to prevent falls by older people, it was noted that data in this respect was currently being awaited from the PCT for inclusion within the Action Plan.

80. CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRES

(Councillor T V Rogers, Executive Councillor for Finance and Customer Services, was in attendance for consideration of this item).

With the aid of a presentation by the Head of Customer Services and Customer Service Manager, the Panel were acquainted with proposed service changes to the Council's Customer Service Centres. Members received details of the level of service currently offered together with the type and number of enquiries received per annum and proposed service reductions for each of the Centres.

Members were advised that the Centres had been reviewed taking into account customer profiles at each locality and the level of local need. Given that the St Neots Customer Service Centre experienced a significant number of enquiries relating to benefits and housing enquiries, proposals for St Neots would not be as great as originally planned. The Council would continue to provide essential services at each location.

Members expressed concern at the impact of the proposals on the voluntary organisations that currently utilised the existing premises and at the Council's increased reliance on local libraries to deliver its services. The latter was considered in the context of the County Council's review of library services which was expected to result in the closure of some facilities across the County; however, greater footfall in libraries through joint working with the District Council would increase the chances of their retention. Members were of the view that the option for service provision also should be investigated.

Members noted that the proposals were designed to encourage customers to utilise alternative methods of obtaining services, particularly the Council's Call Centre and website. The Panel questioned the training provided to Call Centre employees when dealing with housing and benefits enquiries. In response, it was reported that employees had access to the Council's back office systems and could respond to most enquiries, but that those in relation to a specific matter would be referred to the relevant department within the Council.

Other matters that were discussed included the terms of the building leases for each of the Centres and the option of engaging with Peterborough City Council to provide housing and benefits services. The latter would primarily involve the City Council verifying the identity of residents in the Yaxley area, which would then be sent electronically to the District Council. Comment was made that if the proposals were approved, the service changes should be effectively communicated and publicised to customers.

In concluding their discussions, the Chairman reminded the Panel

that the matter would be considered further at the February 2011 meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) as part of the Budget and MTP.

81. ONE LEISURE PERFORMANCE

(At this point during the meeting (9.00pm), Councillor Mrs P A Jordan left the meeting).

(Councillor Mrs D C Reynolds, Executive Councillor for Leisure and Law, Property and Governance, was in attendance for consideration of this item).

A presentation was delivered by the General Manager, One Leisure on the performance of One Leisure over the previous three years. In so doing, he drew attention to the level of investment made at each of the Centres together with the impact that this has had on the net outturn and the number of admissions for each Centre.

Members were acquainted with the level of management and administration costs which were outside the control of the General Manager, One Leisure and noted details of issues facing the service and options that were currently being investigated with a view to achieving savings for the Council, which included staffing levels and pay. The Panel's attention was drawn to the socio-economic factors affecting the financial performance of the Sawtry and Ramsey facilities and the likely decrease in income from local schools in the future.

In response to a question by a Member concerning the feasibility of putting the Leisure Centres into a Trust and the impact of this in terms of reducing the level of recharges incurred by the Centres, the Director of Commerce and Technology responded by informing Members that the Centres would still incur overhead costs and that consideration would be given to this and a range of other options.

The Panel discussed a number of matters including the practices employed by the private sector operators of similar facilities, the level of expenditure on employees, the possibility of reducing the Centres opening hours with a view to reducing costs and the value of the business and its assets. Having regard to expenditure on employees, comment was made that market rates for pay should be reflected at the Leisure Centres and that the current system did not seem to be appropriate for use at the Centres.

Having concluded their discussions, Members were reminded that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) would give further consideration to the information presented on One Leisure at its meeting in January.

82. STUDY: CONSULTATION PROCESSES

Members received an update on the outcome of an initial meeting of the Consultation Processes Working Group. Members noted that Councillor R J West had been appointed rapporteur for the Working Group.

83. CAMBRIDGESHIRE ADULTS WELL-BEING AND HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillor R J West reported that the Hinchingsbrooke Hospital Working Group appointed by the Adults Well-Being and Health Scrutiny Committee had met with Circle, the franchisee appointed to take over the management of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital to discuss their approach to running the Hospital.

84. CAMBRIDGESHIRE SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Members' attention was drawn to a meeting of the Cambridgeshire Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee held on 13th December 2010 which had been attended by the Scrutiny and Review Manager, Mr R Coxhead and Mrs M Nicholas. In so doing, it was reported that the Committee were considering whether to pursue rural crime as a topic for scrutiny. Initially, an invitation would be extended to all Cambridgeshire authorities to nominate a representative to join a Working Group to investigate the role and effectiveness of the Rural Crime Action Team.

85. 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) containing details of studies currently being undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels. Following a query at the last meeting, and with the agreement of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being), the Panel decided to transfer the study on the health implications of the night time economy to its work programme. In that light, the Scrutiny and Review Manager undertook to submit further background information on the topic to a future Panel meeting.

86. 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.

The Scrutiny and Review Manager reported that he had circulated electronically to Members, details of a consultation undertaken by NHS Cambridgeshire on Improving Older People's Mental Health Services in Huntingdonshire and Fenland. Members were encouraged to submit individual responses to the consultation to NHS Cambridgeshire.

87. SCRUTINY

In scrutinising the 110th Edition of the Digest of Decisions, the Panel queried what arrangements would be in place to scrutinise the Greater Cambridge and Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership.

With regard to the work currently being undertaken by the Overview

and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) in respect of the development of a Tree Strategy for Huntingdonshire, comment was made on the loss of trees locally through development. In response, Councillor P G Mitchell reported that the Development Management Panel took existing trees into account when determining planning applications.

Chairman