

Decision Digest

Edition 114

Monthly summary of the decisions taken at meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny and other Panels for the period 4th April to 27th May 2011.

GREATER CAMBRIDGE – GREATER PETERBOROUGH LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) has received an update on the progress that has been made in the establishment of the Greater Cambridge – Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

The Panel has been advised of LEP's ambition to achieve "100,000 major businesses and create 160,000 new jobs by 2025, in an internationally significant low carbon, knowledge-based economy", its economic geography and priorities and details of the LEP Board membership.

With regard to funding, the Panel understood that local authorities had agreed to make a funding contribution to the LEP and contributions "in kind" were also being made. Applications had been made to two sources of money for capacity and transition funding, the outcome of which was not yet known.

The LEP would shortly be submitting a proposal for an enterprise zone. Having been advised of the benefits of enterprise zones, (which include full business rate discount of up to £55k for up to five years), Members have commented on the potential zones have to promote economic development in their surrounding areas. Comment was made about the dangers of business rate discounts for businesses in new areas if their terms

are not tightly drawn to prevent existing areas from becoming empty and new zones being abandoned once the financial incentives have ended.

The Panel has also been advised that to be eligible to be an enterprise zone, the local planning authority would have to declare an Order reducing planning requirements.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMIC WELL-BEING) – PROGRESS

Councillor M F Shellens and Independent Member Mr R Hall have investigated the business case for the multi-storey car park in Huntingdon. As a consequence of their findings, the Panel has suggested that the Council should introduce a more detailed methodology for the assessment of projects under consideration.

The Panel has also asked the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) to look into the availability of larger houses for letting through the Council's housing register.

FUTURE GOVERNANCE OF HINCHINGBROOKE HOSPITAL

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) has received a presentation from representatives of Circle on the operating model and vision that Circle will employ once they assume responsibility for the governance of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital. The formal agreement

between Circle and the Strategic Health Authority is yet to be signed but it is anticipated that Circle will take over the running of the Hospital at the end of June 2011.

Circle's business model is that of a partnership mutual which enables clinicians and other professionals to have a share in the ownership of Circle with shareholder voting rights to help direct the company. The model empowers doctors, nurses and all other employees who work within their hospitals, treatment centres and clinics, to put patient's needs first through a bottom-up approach to management.

The bidding process has been subject to extensive scrutiny by the Department of Health together with the Hinchingsbrooke Hospital Stakeholder Panel to ensure that the rules of engagement are complied with. The Panel has also been informed of the Hospital's future direction of travel and noted the areas that will be explored by Circle to enhance the services currently provided. Members have discussed a number of these matters in depth and made suggestions for areas which they would wish to see improved to include service enhancements within adult wards and general care of the elderly.

A three month mobilisation phase will commence once the contractual arrangements are in place. Representatives of Circle will report back to the Panel on progress made at the Panel's September 2011 meeting.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

Under the provisions of the Police and Criminal Justice Act 2006, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) has scrutinised the work of the Huntingdonshire Community Safety Partnership. Attention was drawn to the level of funding awarded to the

Partnership for the 2011/12 financial year, which represents a significant reduction from the previous year to £56,880. Recent developments concerning the election of a Police and Crime Commissioner in May 2011 have been noted together with the changes that this would bring to the Partnership in terms of bidding against community and voluntary organisations for future funding.

The Panel has acknowledged the complexity in the way in which the Partnership is required to operate to meet the challenges faced by the District and has concluded, on the basis of the data presented in the Strategic Assessment, that it is effective in its work. The Huntingdonshire Community Safety Plan 2011-14 has been reviewed and it was noted that the Strategic Assessment is conducted each year to inform the priorities that are included within it.

The Panel has discussed a number of matters and received a response to each from the Chairman of the Partnership. Members have subsequently expressed their satisfaction that the Partnership has appropriate monitoring and accountability mechanisms in place.

MONITORING OF SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS (PLANNING OBLIGATIONS)

An update on the receipt and expenditure by the Council of money negotiated under Section 106 Agreements has been delivered to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being). A copy of the spending plan for the construction of a Multi-Use Games Area in Godmanchester will be circulated to the Panel for information.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE ADULTS WELL-BEING AND HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Brief updates have been delivered by Councillor R J West to Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) on service changes following the closure of Hawthorne Ward at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital. In addition, it has been reported that the mental health service has been tasked with identifying £3,000,000 of savings and consequently are exploring alternative service delivery methods, which include the use of the internet for preliminary advice and guidance.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SOCIAL WELL-BEING) – PROGRESS

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) have received updates on the outcome of recent meetings of the Consultation Processes, One Leisure and Voluntary Sector Working Groups. An update on progress of negotiations on the future of the CCTV service has been requested for the Panel's July meeting.

WIND FARMS

The Overview and Scrutiny (Environmental Well-being) Panel has been updated on the Council's position from a planning perspective with regard to wind farms.

Members have been advised that all applications are considered against national planning policy which supports the government's commitment to renewable energy. Each application is considered on its merits and should be in a suitable location. The Government does not support developments in areas of nationally significant landscape but Huntingdonshire has no such areas. The Council has not adopted a policy that wind farms should not be located within 2km of a residence, however a Private Member's Bill 'Wind Turbines (Minimum Distance from Residential

Premises)' containing such provisions, is shortly due to have a second reading in the House of Lords. The Panel has been advised that current planning policy is due to be replaced with new guidance, the New National Planning Policy Framework which will act as a catalyst for the revision of local policy.

RURAL TRANSPORT

The Overview and Scrutiny (Environmental Well-being) Panel has received an update on a local transport project being led by Cambridgeshire County Council. Members have been advised that following a reduction in funding, subsidised transport in the area is likely to be phased out. The aim of the project which has been established in conjunction with Inspire East, District Councils, the Health Authority and other relevant partners is to look at all forms of transport in the County and shape a new transport network financed from a central fund, expected to be in the region of £23m. The District Council is represented at officer level and has Member representation on the project's Governance Panel.

In devising the new network, community infrastructures will have to be reviewed and some areas of the District may be better served if they are aligned with neighbouring Districts. The Panel has been advised that the project might aid the delivery of better transportation which has been a common theme in parish plans.

The County Council has indicated that it will delegate direct management of transportation to local areas while retaining its statutory responsibilities. The fund will be administered by non profit making community interest companies with any surplus ploughed back into transport services. Members have acknowledged that the project is a positive step forward and agreed there

is a need for a full review of local transportation. However, they have however drawn attention to the diminishing number of commercial bus routes and to problems that could arise from the statutory requirements on public sector organisations to provide transport, which can be costly.

CABINET FEEDBACK

The Cabinet has supported the views of the Overview and Scrutiny (Environmental Well-being) Panel's that land within the Great Fen Project area that is currently in arable production, should remain in use for that purpose pending a review of the land that is currently under restoration, the development proposals for visitor facilities and the creation of associated employment opportunities. The Panel had felt that land in the area was being changed from arable production more rapidly than had been envisaged and were concerned at the length of time it would take for peripheral benefits for local communities in terms of tourism and employment to come to fruition. These views will be conveyed to the Great Fen Partners along with Members concerns over the possible increase in mosquitos in the area which in turn may lead to the occurrence of malaria.

FINANCIAL MONITORING

The Head of Financial Services has drawn to the Cabinet's attention variations to the approved Capital Programme and spending variations in the revenue budget for the current year. Members have noted that whilst savings in the revenue budget of £2.0m are likely to be achieved, £2.7m of reserves will still need to be used to cover the 2010/11 deficit.

DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS

Nineteen applications have been considered over two meetings of the Development Management Panel and of these seventeen were approved and two refused. In terms of the applications which hold wider public interest, the Panel has given consent for changes to the store currently occupied by Sainsbury's in St Germain Walk, Huntingdon and other alterations to that site to accommodate a new retail unit.

A separate application to create a new foodstore and petrol filling station, nine further retail and thirteen residential units, office floor space and car parking also was approved for land between St John's Street and George Street, Huntingdon. Both applications will be subject to comprehensive conditions and a S106 Agreement.

Approval also has been given to the construction of 48 new build houses, following the demolition of existing poor quality properties on land at the Whaddons and Butts Grove Way, Huntingdon.

ENFORCEMENT ACTION: HARTFORD MARINA

The Development Management Panel has reviewed the current position with regard to the enforcement issues at Hartford Marina. The Panel previously had endorsed a series of recommendations made to them by a Working Party which had been appointed to consider the matter. Following representations made by the Ward Councillor, Marina Manager and Chairman of the Marina Community Association and whilst disappointed that little progress had been made in the intervening period, the Panel requested the Head of Planning Services, in conjunction with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Panel, to make a presentation to the Community Association, Marina owner

and residents on the process envisaged by officers which ultimately should take the process forward. The owner/manager and/or occupiers of floating lodges, houseboats and other boats would then be invited to apply for planning permission to rationalise the current situation at the Marina.