

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SOCIAL WELL-BEING) held in Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 7 June 2011.

- PRESENT: Councillor S J Criswell – Chairman.
- Councillors S Akthar, K M Baker, J J Dutton, Mrs P A Jordan, Mrs D C Reynolds and R J West.
- Mr R Coxhead and Mrs M Nicholas
- APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors I C Bates, Mrs J A Dew and S M Van De Kerkhove.
- IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor P G Mitchell and Councillor T D Sanderson.

6. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Panel held on 5th April and 18th May 2011 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

7. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

8. 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 Executive Leader of the Council for the period 1st June to 30th September 2011.

The Panel was advised that both the Homelessness Strategy and the Home Improvement Agency Review – Future Delivery Model Consultation, would be submitted to the Panel following changes to the allocation of portfolio responsibilities to the Panels since the Plan had been published.

9. ONE LEISURE ST IVES - PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT

In light of the proposed redevelopment of One Leisure St Ives and the consequential closure of the rifle range and associated facilities, Mr T Smith, Honorary Secretary of St Ives Rifle and Pistol Club addressed the Panel on the impact of the proposals on the Club. Mr Smith outlined the history of the Club, which had been established in 1942. The Club had been based at the St Ives Outdoor Centre. It owned its own armoury and equipment and had moved to the present site in 1974 when, with the aid of a Sports Council grant, the specialised

facilities required by the Club had been incorporated into the leisure centre.

Mr Smith explained that the club consisted of 62 members, two of whom were disabled. Although the possibility of moving to a new site had been investigated, no alternative facilities had been found. Mr Smith brought to the attention of the Panel the Club's recent involvement in providing target shooting taster sessions in association with the leisure centre, which had been oversubscribed. He pointed out that, in addition to the disabled, the Club catered for several youth groups. This gave young people the opportunity to take part in the sport in a safe and secure environment. The Club had received many letters of support from national bodies and had been in contact with Sport England regarding the potential loss of the facility. In closing Mr Smith requested the Panel to consider the cost of providing a reduced range area within the redevelopment of the Centre.

Following questions from the Panel, Mr Smith confirmed that the Club would be prepared to give up half the current range site if alternative plans could be made to remodel the area. In discussing the existence of the stair lift in the facility, Mr Smith informed Members that the range had been recognised as requiring disabled access and the stair lift had been installed and maintained by the Leisure Centre. Members of the Panel enquired whether youth groups would be able to access alternative clubs in the area and were informed that this would require them travelling to Cambridge or Yaxley where the firearms facilities were not of the same standard. With regard to the Club's search for alternative premises, Members suggested that the Police might be approached, whose range had been open to external clubs in the past, but had been closed to them for security reasons.

The Chairman thanked Mr Smith for attending the meeting.

10. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of the authority.

11. ONE LEISURE ST IVES - PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT

(Councillor T D Sanderson, Executive Councillor for Healthy and Active Communities was in attendance for this item.)

The Panel considered a report by the One Leisure General Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on detailed proposals to remodel One Leisure St Ives. The Panel was reminded that the proposals had originated from a requirement to reduce net operating costs for the One Leisure group as a major part of the savings identified for the Council for the years 2011 onwards, and to increase admission and participation levels in order to meet both Government and Council health agenda targets. Members were informed that there had been little investment in the Leisure Centre in the 37 years since its construction and the proposals would allow the Centre to capitalise on the latent existing demand in the area and on

demand created by housing growth. If agreed, the development scheme had the potential to deliver a net revenue surplus of over £540k per annum in three years and an increase in admissions in excess of 100,000 per annum.

Members were acquainted with four options for the future of the Centre and the level of investment they would entail. An amended table relating to paragraph 13.3 of the report was tabled. The investment figures had been compiled on the basis of experience of similar Leisure Centre redevelopment projects in St Neots and Huntingdon and liaison with designers but could not be confirmed until tenders were returned. Subject to a number of factors, payback was estimated in between 10 and 12 years. Members were advised that although disruption to the Centre would be unavoidable during the estimated 12 month build time, key areas would remain open throughout and some areas could be opened sequentially.

In the course of their discussions reference was made to the proposed closure of the rifle range. The General Manager One Leisure, Mr S Bell, stressed that his brief had been to reduce the Leisure Centres' operating loss and the rifle range had not been incorporated into the remodelling proposals because it produced a minimal amount of income and the alternative use to which the area could be put was likely to produce a significant return.

The Panel also learned that it would be highly unlikely that external funding for the rifle range would be available. Following a question from a Member on the availability of alternative space at the Centre for the Club, Mr Bell suggested that there was a possibility that space might be found above the proposed new extension, however, this would require further design work and the cost was not known. With respect to the original loan for the provision of the facility, Members were advised that the Sports Council had confirmed that the grant had been given in perpetuity and there was no longer an obligation on the Council to continue to provide the facility. Mr Smith had been advised of this. With regard to the question of accessibility, Mr Bell was of the opinion that the proposed alternative facility would be accessible to a larger number of disabled people. Having discussed the Council's contrasting priorities in terms of increasing its income by competing in the commercial leisure sector compared with providing a diverse range of services to residents, it was

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be recommended to

- a) approve Option B to redevelop One Leisure St Ives;
and
- b) investigate incorporating a reduced rifle range within the redevelopment.

12. RE-ADMITTANCE OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the public be re-admitted to the meeting.

13. CONSULTATION PROCESSES

(Councillor P G Mitchell was in attendance for this Item.)

With the assistance of a report by the Consultation Processes Working Group (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) Councillor P G Mitchell acquainted the Panel with the outcome of the deliberations of the Working Group. The Working Group had been established to review the Council's consultation and engagement policies, procedures and practices with a view to making recommendations on possible improvements to the existing processes.

In considering the report, Members' attention was drawn to the key issues that the Group had addressed and to its recommendations. Particular reference was made to examples of previous consultations undertaken by the Council. The Panel discussed the validity of the methods employed by the Council to undertake the 2010 budget consultation.

With regard to the guidance offered to internal departments, Members endorsed a recommendation that Heads of Service, Ward Members and the Overview and Scrutiny Panels should be involved in consultations prior to their publication. They also agreed that a consultation plan should be established and that the Consultation Calendar and Database, which were available on the Council's Intranet, should be regularly updated.

Members expressed concern at the withdrawal of the free door to door publication District Wide, which they considered would adversely affect the Council's ability to disseminate information on its consultations to the District's residents. Having acknowledged that there was a need to improve the Council's current consultation processes and the public's perception of them, it was

RESOLVED

that the Working Group's report and recommendations be endorsed for submission to the Cabinet.

14. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The Panel considered a report by the Head of People, Performance and Partnerships (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) containing details of the Council's performance against its priority objectives in the quarter to 31st March 2011. Members endorsed for submission to the Cabinet the comments of the Corporate Plan Working Group. Having been advised of the continuance of, and increase in, the Homelessness Prevention Grant paid to the Council, the Panel was advised that there were concerns over changes to the Housing Benefit system which were likely to reduce the Council's homelessness prevention options, potentially leading to higher rates of statutory homelessness and an increase in the number of households placed in temporary accommodation. The Panel requested further information in this respect.

15. ONE LEISURE FINANCE

With the aid of a report by the One Leisure Finance Working Group (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel was provided with an update on the progress of the Working Group's review of the financial performance of One Leisure.

In considering the initial findings of the Working Group and having noted the benefits of looking at both social and economic aspects of the service, the Panel

RESOLVED

that the Working Group's recommendation be submitted to the Cabinet.

16. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANELS - SCHEME OF CO-OPTION

The Panel considered the Council's Scheme of Co-option to Overview and Scrutiny Panels (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), which had been amended having regard to input from the Council's Co-opted Members. Having acknowledged the valuable contribution made to the Panel by the Co-opted Members, it was

RESOLVED

that the revised scheme of co-option be adopted.

17. CAMBRIDGESHIRE ADULTS WELL-BEING AND HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Panel received and noted the Minutes of the meeting of the Adults, Well-Being and Health Scrutiny Committee held on 22nd March 2011 (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). Having attended the Committee's first meeting of the new Municipal Year, Councillor West undertook to make the Minutes of that meeting available to the next meeting of the Panel.

18. REMIT AND WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) reviewing the Panel's programme of studies and providing an opportunity for Members to plan their work programme for the year. The Panel was acquainted with the changes to Executive Councillors' responsibilities following the election of a new Executive Leader of the Council and the ensuing changes to the allocation of Council services to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

In discussing possible future studies Members requested further information on the issue of homelessness and the Council's capacity to meet its statutory duties in this respect.

Membership of the Panel's existing working groups was discussed by the Panel and appointments were made to both the Voluntary Sector Working Group and the One Leisure Finance Working Group. The Panel also was informed of the ongoing review into the operation of

the Strategic Partnership, following which the Panel would commence scrutiny of the thematic groups that fell within their remit.

Following discussion on a number of suggestions for studies by Panel Members, it was

RESOLVED

- a. that the contents of the report be noted;
- b. that a scoping report be submitted to a future meeting on the emerging issues of homelessness and the Council's capacity to meet its statutory duties in this respect;
- c. that a scoping report be submitted to a future meeting on the Council's Neighbourhood Panels;
- d. that Councillors Mrs P A Jordan and K M Baker be appointed to the Voluntary Sector Working Group;
- e. that Councillor Mrs D C Reynolds be appointed to the One Leisure Finance Joint Working Group, and
- f. Councillor Mrs D C Reynolds be appointed as the Panel's representative to Cambridgeshire's Safer and Stronger Overview and Scrutiny Committee's investigations into domestic abuse.

19. SCRUTINY

The Panel received and noted the latest edition of the Council's Decision Digest.

Chairman