

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMIC WELL-BEING) held in CVSO1.A, CIVIC SUITE, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON PE29 3TN on Thursday, 9 June 2011.

PRESENT: Councillor D M Tysoe – Chairman.

Councillors G J Bull, E R Butler, S Greenall, R Harrison, R B Howe, A J Mackender-Lawrence, P G Mitchell, M F Shellens and A H Williams.

Co-opted Members Mr R Hall and Mrs H Roberts.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors T V Rogers and T D Sanderson.

4. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Panel held on 14th April and 18th May 2011 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

6. 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. Members were advised that a presentation on proposals for future communications with residents would be given to their next meeting and that a report on a proposed Enterprise zone within the District had been circulated for information.

7. DEVELOPMENT OF ONE LEISURE, ST IVES

In advance of their consideration of proposals to re-model One Leisure St Ives, the Chairman invited Mr T Smith of St Ives District Rifle and Pistol Club to address the Panel. Mr Smith explained that the Club had received notification that a potential alternative use had been identified for the range area at One Leisure St Ives and that, as a result, the Centre would no longer provide range facilities for the Club's use. Members were advised that the Club had moved to the Centre in 1974 and built its own facilities with the assistance of a grant from the Eastern Sports Council. He also drew attention to the membership of the Club, the work which was undertaken by young people and the disabled, the absence of any suitable alternative facilities within the local area and the potential impact on the Club of

the closure of the facility.

The Panel were advised that following the receipt of notice from the Council, Club members had sought support from Executive District Councillors, Members of Parliament, local councils, Sport England and the Constabulary for the retention of the range. A petition containing 430 signatures objecting to the proposals was also currently being prepared. In concluding his presentation, Mr Smith queried why there had been no provision in the re-development proposals for the range and armoury facilities and urged Members of the Panel to give the matter due consideration.

In response to a question by Councillor P G Mitchell, Mr Smith explained that the Club had insufficient capital to contribute towards the re-provision costs but that its members would be willing to engage in fund-raising efforts if it meant that they could continue to shoot at One Leisure St Ives.

The Chairman thanked Mr Smith for attending the meeting.

8. 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.

9. DEVELOPMENT OF ONE LEISURE, ST IVES

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

The Panel considered a report by the General Manager, One Leisure (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) outlining proposals to re-model the St Ivo Leisure Centre. Members noted that the proposals were intended to reduce the Centre's net operating costs and to increase admissions and participation levels to meet both Government and Council health agenda targets. The Panel were then acquainted with details of four options for the future of the Centre and the rationale and anticipated demand for them.

In reviewing the contents of the report, Members commented on the timing of the proposal given that the Council was currently seeking to achieve significant savings over the course of the next few years. In response, the Head of Financial Services drew attention to the financial information contained within the report including the anticipated rate of return and payback period. Members were advised that the proposals were expected to turn the Centre's annual operating deficit into a significant profit within a three year period and would also contribute to the Council's budget reduction plan. Details of the expected financial contribution from specific elements of the proposal were tabled for information (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book).

Arising from the report the Panel raised a number of questions relating to the rate of return which had been achieved from the re-development of One Leisure St Neots, whether any investment

should be undertaken if proposals to establish a Leisure Trust were to be pursued and the methods used to predict compound growth. Following a question about the component activities within each of the four proposals, the General Manager agreed to circulate the rationale behind the packaging of activities and the cost of individual elements within the schemes. Members were also informed that there was some degree of interdependency between some of the components.

Councillor M F Shellens stated that he supported the re-development but expressed concerns about its timing in the current economic climate. He suggested that it might be appropriate to delay the project to enable consideration to be given to possible changes in the future income forecasts. Members then queried the level of admissions that would be required for the project to break-even. It was suggested that this information should be included within the report prior to its submission to the Cabinet. It was further suggested that following receipt of tenders for the redevelopment a review should be undertaken of the building costs and economic conditions.

Other matters that were discussed included the efficiency and reliability of the heating and ventilation equipment within the existing facility and the timescale for their replacement, the activities of private sector operators within the District, the current capacity of the Burgess Hall and the potential for income to be disrupted during the construction process. Members also queried whether consideration had been given to the use of solar power, grey water recycling and rain water re-harvesting within the building design. In response, the General Manager explained that it was intended that environmentally friendly initiatives would be pursued as part of the proposals. Such measures had previously been considered as part of the re-modelling of One Leisure St Neots.

The Panel was informed of the conclusions reached by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) who had suggested that consideration should be given to the provision of a smaller rifle facility within the development. Being mindful of the information presented by Mr T Smith earlier in the meeting (Minute No. 10/7 refers), Members of the Economic Well-Being Panel were of the view that separate plans should be developed that incorporated shooting facilities. These plans might be pursued if the Rifle and Pistol Club were able to make a significant contribution to the cost of construction. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be recommended to

- a. proceed with Option B to develop One Leisure St Ives, subject to additional information being provided on the attendance levels required to break-even, recent trends in occupancy levels, the interdependency of various elements of the proposals and more detailed information on income and cost forecasts;
- b. obtain separate designs incorporating facilities for the St Ives Rifle and Pistol Club for development subject to the Rifle and Pistol Club making a significant contribution to

the capital costs; and

- c. undertake a review of the tenders received for the re-development to assess the building costs involved and economic conditions at the time.

10. RE-ADMITTANCE OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the public be re-admitted to the meeting.

11. USE OF CONSULTANTS

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

Further to Minute No 10/55 and with the assistance of a report by the Use of Consultants Working Group (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel were acquainted with the outcome of the deliberations of the Working Group, which had been established to review and make recommendations on the Council's use of consultants.

Having noted the key issues that the Group had addressed, Councillor T V Rogers, Executive Councillor for Resources and Customer Services, indicated that the recommendations were feasible and unlikely to meet with any objections from the Cabinet. Councillor Rogers also advised Members that, in light of the review, he would conduct a further investigation into the Council's procurement arrangements. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

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

12. ONE LEISURE FINANCE

With the assistance of a report by the One Leisure Finance Working Group (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel received an update on the deliberations of the Working Group, which had been established to review the performance of One Leisure and make recommendations on the service's future strategic direction.

Members' attention having been drawn to matters that the Group had addressed to-date, comment was made on the need for further information on the purpose of central recharges and the process through which the Council allocated them. It was agreed that a copy of a report on this subject, which had been considered by the Working Group, would be circulated to Members for information. The Head of Financial Services also undertook to liaise with interested Members on a one to one basis if required.

In response to a question from Councillor M F Shellens, the Panel were advised that the Group would consider the question of charging

differential rates for non residents of the District once their other investigations had been completed. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Working Group's report be noted and their recommendation endorsed for submission to the Cabinet.

13. 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 the priority objectives in the Panel's remit in the quarter to 31st March 2011. Members' attention was drawn to the matters raised at a recent meeting of the Corporate Plan Working Group and the Scrutiny and Review Manager provided clarification of the recent upturn in recruitment referred to within the report.

Having been reminded that a new Council Plan was adopted in April 2011, the Panel noted that consideration was currently being given to future performance monitoring mechanisms. With this in mind, Members endorsed a suggestion that Overview and Scrutiny should continue to be involved in monitoring performance against the new Plan on a regular basis.

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

The Panel considered a number of suggested changes to the Scheme of Co-option to Overview and Scrutiny Panels. Having noted that the suggestions for changes had been made by the Co-opted Members as part of a recent review of the Scheme, it was

RESOLVED

that the revised Scheme of Co-option now submitted be adopted with immediate effect.

15. 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 current year.

In considering the Panel's existing programme of studies, Members were advised that a further request would be made for information on the condition and maintenance of the A14 Viaduct in Huntingdon. The Scrutiny and Review Manager reported that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) had been asked to investigate the availability of larger houses for letting through the Council's housing register as part of a wider study and that the review of the Employees Performance Development Review process had not yet been completed. The Panel agreed to retain the study on Visitor Development and Town Centre vibrancy as part of their work programme for the forthcoming year.

With regard to the study on One Leisure, having been advised of the need to make changes to the composition of the Working Group following recent appointments to the Council's Cabinet, it was

RESOLVED

that Councillor D M Tysoe be appointed to the One Leisure Finance Working Group.

16. SCRUTINY

The Panel received and noted the latest edition of the Council's Decision Digest (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book).

Chairman