

**Monthly summary of the decisions taken at meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny and other Panels for the period 1st to 25th November 2011.**

**UPDATE ON LOCAL ENTERPRISE ZONE IN ALCONBURY**

An update on the development of the Alconbury Enterprise Zone has been received by the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being). At the same time, the Panel was acquainted with a range of issues relating to the establishment of the zone by the Greater Cambridgeshire & Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) including the :

- ❖ advantages for businesses relocating to the area;
- ❖ planning and governance arrangements;
- ❖ steps which will be taken to maximise new business on the site;
- ❖ opportunities for businesses off site; and
- ❖ the potential for job growth in the area.

As a consequence of the presentation, the Panel has considered the planning processes which would be adopted for the Local Enterprise Zone and the infrastructure arrangements which would be in place for the site.

A discussion also took place with regard to the decision to target start up businesses, the type of businesses which the Local Enterprise Partnership would seek to attract to the area and

whether effective links were being made with local Universities to ensure the development of appropriate employment skills. Having noted that the Local Enterprise Partnership would have responsibility for distributing the retained business rates within the LEP area, a Member queried whether there was a potential for the District Council to lose business rates revenue.

The Panel has also discussed the expected improvements in broadband which were associated with the development of the site. Members have asked for a definition of “superfast broadband” and a briefing on the National Broadband Delivery Project at a future meeting.

**FUNDING FOR CCTV**

The Overview & Scrutiny Panels for Social and Economic Well-Being have considered the options for the future operation of the CCTV Service.

The Economic Well-Being Panel has discussed the financial implications of the proposals which included the current position with regard to securing additional funding from partners, the potential for joint working, the co-location of services and the possibility of outsourcing the function.

The Panel has also discussed the potential to introduce an alternative means of image transmission to reduce the cost of using fibre optic cables to transmit images from cameras to the control room. However Members have

been informed that owing to the costs that would be incurred, it will not be possible to make such a change until the long term future of the service has been determined.

The Social Well-Being Panel has welcomed the efforts made to reduce the cost of the service. Discussion has taken place on employee shift patterns, the well established communicative links that CCTV staff have with the Police and Huntingdonshire Business Against Crime together with the skills employed by staff to identify incidents. Other matters that were discussed include the costs associated with removing CCTV cameras, the impact of cameras as a deterrent to perpetrators of crime, the retrospective use of CCTV footage by the Police to obtain successful convictions and the proposed terms of the Service Level Agreement.

On the basis that the current proposal will maintain the service and enable the Council to complete its investigations, and on the understanding that the Cabinet is able to identify alternative savings to meet the additional cost of funding the service in 2012/13, the Panels have endorsed the recommendations in the report.

Subsequently, the Cabinet has approved in principle the funding for CCTV for 2012/13 subject to later consideration of the Council's budget. With this in mind and having been advised that some Town Councils have agreed in principle to support the CCTV service, the Cabinet has approved the contents of a draft Service Level Agreement for Town Councils.

#### **TREASURY MANAGEMENT - REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE**

The Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) has reviewed the performance of the Council's

Investments for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2011. Members noted that the financial markets continued to remain uncertain and their attention was drawn to a recent announcement by Moody's, a leading credit agency which identified the Skipton Building Society as one of the societies which they consider would be unlikely to receive Government Support if it got into difficulties.

As a consequence of the difficulty in differentiating cash flow borrowing, the Panel was advised of a proposal to combine the indicators for 'Cash flow borrowing' and 'Borrowing to fund capital schemes'. An explanation of the role of the Capital Receipts Advisory Group was also received by the Panel. Details of the Council's net position over the next few years will be presented as part of the report on the Council's budget in February 2012.

Subsequently the Cabinet has approved the contents of the report and the merging of the indicators.

#### **REVIEW OF SUPPORT SERVICES**

The Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well Being) has received a range of background information to enable them to undertake a review of the Council's Support Services. The Panel has agreed that the best way to do this is to consider each support service in turn with a view to forming an opinion on its efficiency and cost effectiveness.

Having discussed those areas where it might be appropriate to conduct a pilot review, the Panel has selected the District Council's Document Centre for the purpose. Councillors G Bull, S Greenall, R Howe, A MacKender-Lawrence, T V Rogers and A Williams have been appointed to a working group for this purpose.

### REVIEW OF COUNCIL CONSTITUTION

The Corporate Governance Panel has undertaken a review of the Constitution and has recommended a series of changes to the Council, which related to the Scheme of Delegations, training for Members who serve on regulatory and other Committees of a quasi-judicial nature, the terms of reference for the Overview and Scrutiny Panels and approval of the Council Tax Base. Subsequently, these recommendations were endorsed by the Council.

### VOLUNTARY SECTOR

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) has received the findings of the Voluntary Sector Working Group which was tasked by the Panel to investigate the social value of the functions performed by the voluntary organisations that have Service Level Agreements with the Council.

It was reported that an indicative budget will be sought from the Cabinet in January for funding for the 2013/14 financial year. Discussion has ensued on whether future funding should be awarded through a grant aid process or through an open procurement process and an outline of both options has been delivered to Members.

The Working Group has been tasked with making further investigations into the potential financial impact that any proposed budgetary cuts would have upon demand for District Council services and to undertake a prioritisation exercise of what voluntary services are needed to meet current and future demands for services in Huntingdonshire.

### THE HEALTH IMPLICATIONS OF THE NIGHT TIME ECONOMY

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) received background information on the health implications of the night time economy in Huntingdonshire. Data revealed that since February 2011, 29 incidents of alcohol related assaults could be attributed to the night-time economy. Members are mindful that this figure is not statistically reliable given that information sharing practices with Hinchingbrooke Hospital were only adopted at this time. It was agreed that the situation would continue to be monitored as part of the Panel's annual work on the scrutiny of the Huntingdonshire Community Safety Partnership.

### ANNUAL EQUALITY PROGRESS REPORT

Progress towards the achievement of the Council's Single Equality Scheme and associated action plan has been noted by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) and Cabinet. Of the 51 actions contained within the Plan, 47 had been completed or are ongoing. Details of an external assessment due to be undertaken in February 2012 were noted by the Panel.

### NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUMS - CONSULTATION RESPONSES

The views of District Councillors, relevant County Councillors, Town and Parish Councils and Partners have been noted by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being). Members have been addressed by the Chairmen of the Ramsey and Huntingdon Neighbourhood Forums outlining their views and experiences of the Neighbourhood Forums to date.

The Panel has discussed a number of matters which included the need to engage more directly and effectively with the local community, public

attendance levels and the devolution of decision making responsibilities to the Forums. The need to engage more effectively with the Town and Parish Councils was further discussed by Members.

Owing to the extent of the detailed work required to pursue their investigations, the Panel has appointed Councillors S J Criswell, J J Dutton, S M Van De Kerkhove and R J West, together with Mr R Coxhead onto a Working Group to undertake a review of the Neighbourhood Forums in Huntingdonshire.

### **GREAT FEN PROJECT PRESENTATION**

The Overview and Scrutiny (Environmental Well-being) Panel has received an update on the Great Fen Project by the project's Manager. With the assistance of the Chairman of the Great Fen Project Board Members were advised of the current and future plans for the area which covers 3,700 hectares of wetland including two existing national nature reserves, between Huntingdon and Peterborough.

The Panel has been assured that the combined strengths and skills of the partners involved in the project will be utilised in order to achieve the environmental, social and economic aims as set out in the Masterplan for the area. The Council's Economic Development Manager gave details of her teams plans to help maximise the opportunities for tourism that the area will bring.

### **GREAT FEN SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**

Having received the aforementioned presentation the Overview and Scrutiny (Environmental Well-being) Panel has endorsed for submission to Cabinet a

report updating the Panel on the extensive consultation that had been undertaken in respect of the Great Fen Masterplan. Members have been advised that, if adopted, the document will provide planning guidance to inform Council policy and provide material consideration in respect of any planning proposals in the area. Having previously voiced concerns over the speed with which the project was moving, whereby agricultural land was being taken out of production prior to provision being made for alternate use for the area, Members expressed their support for the new socioeconomic study that is being undertaken.

The Development Management Panel has endorsed the content of the Supplementary Planning Guidance and recommended that it be adopted by the Cabinet as District Council Planning Policy. During the Panel's discussion, Members were aware of the commercial possibilities presented by the Fen and in particular the opportunity to provide water storage for local farmers and businesses and it was understood that discussions already were underway with the Environment Agency towards such a project.

### **CARBON MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Overview and Scrutiny (Environmental Well-being) Panel has approved for submission to Cabinet a report updating them on progress against the targets set out in the Council's Carbon Management Plan (CMP).

The Panel has been advised of the 15% reduction in the Council's carbon emissions which place it on course to deliver the 30% CO<sub>2</sub>e reduction required up to 2013. Members were made aware of ongoing work to determine the most appropriate efficiency saving measures for the Council's sites, and the implications for

the proposals to install solar photovoltaic panels at a number of the Council's sites, given the recent changes to feed in tariffs made by the Government.

In noting the progress of the Plan, the Cabinet has supported the undertaking of cross functional energy reviews as a way of maximising cost savings and the continued use of the Salix ring-fenced funding and Environment Strategy Capital Funding to implement further energy savings projects.

With regard to the scheme for solar panels, the Cabinet has authorised the Managing Directors (Resources) and (Communities, Partnerships and Projects), after consultation with Executive Councillors, to approve the installation of the panels on the Council's main sites. The timing of this decision will be dependent upon the deadline for registering the scheme for Government's subsidies and a further report on this matter will be considered at the Cabinet's next meeting.

### **LOVES FARM, ST NEOTS**

The Overview and Scrutiny (Environmental Well-being) Panel has decided that a working group should be convened in order to learn from mistakes made over the design of past planning developments and to inform future housing developments.

The decision was made following the Panel's consideration of problems affecting the Loves Farm development in St Neots which were brought to the Panel's attention by fellow councillors concerned at the density of housing on the development and the associated problems, including those of road access and standards, and the aesthetics of the area.

Members requested that all problems within the area be summarised for consideration by the working group.

### **LAND AT THE WHADDONS/THONGSLEY HUNTINGDON**

The Cabinet has approved the disposal of an area of Council land at the Whaddons/Thongsley to the Luminus Group, subject to the Executive Councillor for Resources being satisfied that the Council's legal costs for the sale are being met.

### **HUNTINGDONSHIRE COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY DRAFT CHARGING SCHEDULE**

Following its consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny (Environmental Well-being) Panel, the Huntingdonshire Community Infrastructure Levy – Draft Charging Schedule has been approved by the Cabinet for a four week statutory consultation period in November/December 2011.

Having been made aware that the final document will require to be reformatted in accordance with advice received from the Department of Communities and Local Government, the Cabinet has authorised the Head of Planning Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning and Housing to make the necessary amendments and to prepare the document for submission for Examination.

### **EMERGENCY PLANNING – MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

The Managing Director (People, Performance and Partnerships) has been authorised to sign a Memorandum of Understanding for Emergency Management.



The Memorandum has been developed by Cambridgeshire County Council and Cambridgeshire's District Councils to deliver emergency planning in accordance with relevant legislation and to ensure the provision of mutual aid in the event of an incident.

### **RAF BRAMPTON URBAN DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK (UDF)**

Having regard to the responses received during recent consultation, the Development Management Panel has recommended the Cabinet to authorise the Head of Planning Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing and Chairman of the Panel to finalise the content of the RAF Brampton UDF.

The UDF will provide a framework to enable the delivery of a high quality sustainable mixed development for what is considered to be an important and sensitive site in Brampton. The Panel was made aware that the one area of objection which remains concerns the Brampton Park Theatre and Members concurred with a suggestion that the final version should include reference to potential options for retention of the theatre and maybe the delivery of a community building. Tribute was paid by the Executive Councillor, Chairman of the Panel and Councillor Shellens to the contributions made to and the success of the Working Group which had helped bring this document to fruition.

### **DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD)**

As it has been necessary to update the Developer Contributions SPD to complement the Draft Charging Schedule for the Huntingdonshire CIL, the Development Management Panel

has endorsed the content of new SPD for adoption by the Cabinet.

In their discussion, the Panel made representations about the requirement for infrastructure improvements in St Neots and particularly to the A428 and understood that leading Members were continuing to lobby the Highways Agency on this and other major routes in the District.

### **HARTFORD MARINA – PROGRESS**

The Development Management Panel has noted the current position in respect of the outstanding enforcement issues at Hartford Marina. Following a public meeting with interested parties it had been agreed that the effective date for planning consent for residential use, should any applications be approved, would be 22nd August 2011. It was the expectation that a series of applications to regularise the situation would be submitted early in the new year.

### **DEVELOPER APPLICATIONS AND MONITORING**

Of the nine applications determined by the Development Management Panel, seven were approved and two refused and significantly the Head of Planning Services was authorised to determine, subject to conditions and an agreement relating to car parking provision, a proposal to demolish Chequers Court in Huntingdon and to replace the buildings with a new supermarket, seven retail units, a restaurant/cafe and two kiosks. As the principle of development at this location was a long standing aspiration of the Council, the proposals were welcomed by the Panel.

The Panel also regularly monitor the activities of the Development Management Division and having noted a reduction in the percentage of major applications determined in 13 weeks in comparison with the previous quarter,

the Panel has noted that overall, the District Council continued to meet the annual targets established by the government for the determination of such applications.