
Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being)

**Report of the meetings held on 13th March and 10th
April 2012**

Matters for Information

**49. CAMBRIDGESHIRE RENEWABLES INFRASTRUCTURE
FRAMEWORK (CRIF) AND CAMBRIDGESHIRE COMMUNITY
ENERGY FUND (CEF)**

The Panel has received a presentation from the Head of Environmental Management on the Cambridgeshire Renewables Infrastructure Framework (CRIF) and the Cambridgeshire Community Energy Fund (CEF). He has presented the case for the development of a framework for delivering action on the renewable and low carbon agenda in Cambridgeshire. Having outlined the environmental targets the County will have to meet by 2038 and the potential economic benefits of the CRIF project, Members have been informed of the project's aims and objectives, the current position with regard to renewable sources of energy and the level of changes that will be required to achieve various scenarios. They have been advised that the CRIF provides a robust evidence base which will promote and deliver the right projects in the right places. They also have been acquainted with the investment opportunities that the project presents and the ways in which communities will be involved.

The CEF presents commercial opportunities both for public sector organisations and for commercial businesses. Members have welcomed the news that solar panels have been installed at Eastfield House. These will provide the Council with electricity for its own use and a significant return on its investment.

The Panel has been informed how the CEF will channel funds from development projects into low carbon infrastructure and carbon emission reduction projects. Members have noted the potential benefits of establishing a CEF, the framework within which it will operate, the timescale for its introduction, how it will be collected and spent and the kind of projects that might be delivered. It is recognised that developers are likely to challenge the inclusion of renewable energy policies in the Local Plan. It is, however, accepted that the Council needs to have in place policy provisions to ensure that CEF income is retained locally.

With specific reference to wind power, it is suggested that the Council should try to influence where wind turbines are located as it is

acknowledged that wind farms work better in some locations than others. Under the new National Planning Policy Framework the Council should be able to specify the area where wind farms are more suitable. In making this recommendation it is recognised there is no upper limit that can be imposed on the amount of wind turbines in an area. Huntingdonshire, at present, is dependent on wind and photovoltaic power for its renewable sources of energy. It will be necessary to make use of the full range of other options and renewables to fill the gaps. Having recently visited Waterbeach Management Park, the Panel has recommended that the options should include deriving energy from waste.

It is significantly cheaper to install renewable measures during construction than retrofit existing properties. Having discussed developer contribution rates, it has been suggested that they should not be set at such a level that developers only provide onsite renewable measures. Given that Huntingdonshire has the greatest renewable potential in Cambridgeshire, it is possible that the District could be a net beneficiary of CEF funds. However, there is the possibility that the CEF could require considerable management and monitoring. The Panel has recommended that the Cabinet should exert control over the arrangements that are put in place for these purposes to ensure they do not proliferate.

As the CRIF and CEF is a complex, technical subject, the Panel has strongly recommended that a clear communication strategy is developed for it. This should comprise simplified messages and stress the cost savings that can be obtained from renewables rather than carbon emissions. It might also make reference to energy conservation as this appears to be missing from current documents.

The Panel has recommended the Cabinet to –

- ◆ note the work undertaken, formally sign off the CRIF/CEF projects and to endorse the future approach to energy and renewables;
- ◆ delegate authority to the Managing Directors to carry forward work on energy and renewables in the District, to deliver the best possible outcomes for business, the community and public sector, within the framework of the CRIF; and
- ◆ note that the Managing Directors will consider the merits of setting up a CEF.

50. SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL SCOPING REPORT

The Panel has reviewed the draft Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report. Having been informed of the Sustainability Appraisal process and the legal background to it, Members have noted that Planning Officers have received dedicated training to enable them to carry out much of the work that will be required. Once completed, the Sustainability Appraisal will be examined by the Council's Legal Team to ensure that it is fit for purpose and to safeguard the Council from legal challenges.

The Panel has recommended the Cabinet to authorise the Head of Planning Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing, to finalise and approve the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report.

51. STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The Panel has considered the outcome of consultation on the draft Statement of Community Involvement. Having been advised that any interested party may register with the Council to be consulted on planning policies, Members have recommended the Cabinet to authorise the Head of Planning Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing and the Chairman of the Development Management Panel, to finalise and approve the Statement of Community Involvement.

52. CAMBRIDGESHIRE FUTURE TRANSPORT STUDY

The Panel has appointed Councillor Mrs M Banerjee to a joint scrutiny review of the Cambridgeshire Future Transport Initiative. The Initiative has been established to find solutions to Cambridgeshire's transport and accessibility challenges.

Other Matters of Interest

53. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING) - PROGRESS

The Panel has reviewed its programme of studies at each of its meetings. An update has been received on the ongoing drainage issues in Yaxley at each meeting. An on-site meeting has been held and the Council's Project and Assets Manager has subsequently alerted Anglian Water to the fact that there is a problem with the surface and foul sewerage system. Having expressed concern over the long running nature of the problem, the Panel has again considered asking the Environment Agency to take enforcement action. Having received a further update at the April meeting, the Panel has accepted a suggestion that a working group is established to look into this matter in detail. Members will be appointed at the next meeting for this purpose.

The Working Group looking at land use for agricultural purposes in the context of planning policies and agriculture's contribution to the local economy is progressing well. Following his attendance at a Working Group meeting, Dave Felce, the local Linking Environment and Farming representative, has extended an invitation to the Panel to visit his farm.

54. WORK PLAN STUDIES

The Panel has received details of studies being undertaken by the other Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

55. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 – FORWARD PLAN

The Panel has been acquainted with the current Forward Plan of Key Decisions at each of its meetings.

56. SCRUTINY

The Panel has considered the latest editions of the Decision Digest and discussed matters contained therein. Further information has been requested on the Call Centre and on proposals for the Neighbourhood Forums.

D Harty
Vice-Chairman