
Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being)

Report of the meeting held on 14th June 2012

Matters for Information

1. MAKING ASSETS COUNT – PROGRESS REPORT

The Panel has received an update on the progress being made by the Cambridgeshire Making Assets Count (MAC) initiative and on the specific developments in the Huntingdonshire area. The purpose of the programme is to enable all public sector organisations in the Cambridgeshire area to develop a joined-up approach to the management and use of their property and other assets. The initiative is currently being regarded nationally as best practice.

In considering the recent developments in the Huntingdonshire area, Members have noted that a half day Countywide seminar will be held on 11th July 2012 at Pathfinder House, which the Under Secretary of State, Baroness Hanham, will be attending. Their attention has also been drawn to the resources which have been made available from Improvement East to assist with the development of business cases for the various area projects in St Ives and St Neots. Whilst the District Council does not possess a significant property portfolio within these towns, Members noted that resources have been made available to develop a robust project methodology and have asked the Managing Director (CPP) to report back on developments at a future meeting.

The Panel's attention has been drawn to the aims and objectives of the Huntingdonshire MAC Board which have been revised following Members' comments at a previous meeting. The Panel has concluded that they are satisfied with the amendments that have been made.

2. TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2011/12

In accordance with the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Best Practice and the Council's Treasury Management Strategy, the Panel has reviewed the performance for the year ending 31st March 2012 in the investment of the Council's capital receipts. Members have been pleased to note that the funds have performed well, significantly exceeding both the benchmark and the budgeted investment interest.

This achievement is particularly significant in the current economic climate.

In considering the contents of the report, the Panel has commented on a range of issues including the 'trigger points' used by the Treasury Management Group to determine whether future investments should be of a short term or long term nature and the approach which will be taken on the expiry of the Council's existing Medium Term Investments.

Councillor P G Mitchell has expressed his continuing concerns with regard to the Council's long term borrowing strategy and specifically its impact on the Council's revenue position. However, the Head of Financial Services has explained that the Government requires the Council to set aside funds for its repayment and that over the course of the 50 year repayment period the investment is likely to have been to the Council's advantage.

In order to continue to use the existing liquidity accounts criteria. Officers have asked the Cabinet to reduce the currently set credit rating levels in relation to the Council's investments in banks and building societies. Members have endorsed this approach.

3. REMIT AND WORK PROGRAMME

During a review of its programme of studies and work programme for the forthcoming year, the Panel has examined the Membership of its existing working groups and agreed that there should be no changes to their composition during 2012/13. Councillor A Mackender-Lawrence will be asked if he wishes to remain on the One Leisure business model study.

Whilst reviewing the existing programme of studies, updates have been provided on the activities of the groups which have been established to review the Council's Document Centre and the business model for One Leisure. Members have also been informed that reports on the governance arrangements for the Community Infrastructure Levy and the future of National Non Domestic Rates will be presented to a future meeting in due course.

The Chairman has acquainted the Panel with the discussions at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) on the implications of forthcoming changes to the Housing Benefit system for the Council's Budget. Further information will be provided at the Panel's next meeting. In addition, Members have been provided with details of studies being undertaken by the other Overview and Scrutiny Panels and reminded of the opportunity that they have to participate in the investigations should they wish.

In considering potential areas for future investigation, the Panel has included Economic Development, Fraud Prevention and the

implications of planning social housing requirements on Community Infrastructure Levy income and the housing waiting list within its work programme for the forthcoming year. A briefing on the Supporting People Back to Work Initiative has also been requested at a future meeting.

Other Matters of Interest

4. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 – FORWARD PLAN

The Panel has been acquainted with details of the current Forward Plan of Key Decisions at each of its meetings. Members have noted those items which will be presented to future meetings and been advised that a report on the proposals for the localisation of National Non Domestic Rates will be available for their July meeting.

5. SCRUTINY

The Panel has considered the latest edition of the Decision Digest and discussed matters contained therein. In so doing, an update has been provided on the current position with regard to the finalisation of the Council's 2010/11 Accounts.

T V Rogers
Chairman