

Decision Digest

Edition 126

Monthly summary of the decisions taken at meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny and other Panels for the period 2nd to 31st July 2012.

UPDATE ON REDESIGN OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) received an update on the redesign of mental health services across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Matters discussed included the transportation arrangements for both patients and their carers, the care in the community services available, the role of the Crisis Resolution Home Treatment Team, the reasons for the closure of Acer Ward, together with the community services available from the Newtown Centre, Huntingdon, the availability of specialist mental health assessments at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital and the development of the Advice and Referral Centre.

VOLUNTARY SECTOR FUNDING 2013/14 ONWARDS

The allocation of funding to support the voluntary sector in Huntingdonshire was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being). The future funding model will now be a grant based system which is intended to be more flexible than the previous commissioning model.

A proposal to link future financial support to a tapering process has been considered by Members. This is intended to encourage voluntary organisations to match fund any grant that they receive from the Council over a three year period and will enable the

budget set by the Council to stretch further. Members expressed reservations over the tapering process which is regarded as being prescriptive on the voluntary organisations' part. The Panel suggested that alternative ways of supporting the voluntary sector should be explored by the Council such as assisting organisations behind the scenes in their search for match funding opportunities.

In considering the key components of the Community Chest award scheme, the Cabinet has reiterated their view that the process should be straight forward and applications limited to local organisations that require a small injection of revenue up to £5,000. Having acknowledged the work of the voluntary sector, the Cabinet has –

- supported a move to a three year period for funding voluntary sector organisations;
- agreed that the determination of grant applications should remain with the Executive Councillors for Healthy and Active Communities and Resources;
- agreed that provision be made to allow some applicants to make presentations in support of their submissions;
- supported the introduction of a simple bid/check/allocation process for Community Chest Funding;
- agreed that those in receipt of funds via the Community Chest scheme should not be eligible

for reconsideration for a period of two years;

- Supported the introduction of a tapering process and a requirement for match funding; and
- Agreed to set a level of Community Chest funding at a maximum level of £5,000 per application.

JOINT STRATEGIC NEEDS ASSESSMENT – AWARENESS RAISING

The Phase 6 Summary Report for the Cambridgeshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment was received by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being). The report plays an integral part in the development of the draft Cambridgeshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy and identifies key information about the health and wellbeing needs of the Cambridgeshire population, together with information about local health inequalities for specific population groups.

DRAFT CAMBRIDGESHIRE HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY 2012-17

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) has appointed Councillors S J Criswell, M Oliver and J Pethard, together with Mr R Coxhead, onto a Working Group to formulate the Panel's response to the draft Cambridgeshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2012-17. The consultation period closes on 17th September 2012 and the draft response will be submitted to the Panel at its September 2012 meeting.

The consultation seeks views on the terms of the proposed priorities identified by the Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board and Network as being important for local people and outlines

how Partners will work together effectively to address them.

Matters discussed by the Panel included the need for enhanced levels of community involvement on health and wellbeing matters, the involvement of NHS Cambridgeshire on infrastructure planning for large scale developments, the level of resources required to meet the needs of the Strategy, the number of county and district-wide strategies utilised to assist the development of the draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the methods of communication adopted to generate awareness of the consultation.

NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUMS – PROPOSALS TO ESTABLISH LOCAL JOINT COMMITTEES IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE – CONSULTATION RESPONSES

The outcome of a consultation on the proposed establishment of Local Joint Committees (LJC's) in Huntingdonshire was reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being). The Working Group appointed by the Panel to undertake the review has responded to each of the consultation responses received.

Matters discussed by the Panel include how the communities views would be represented at meetings, the likely administrative and Officer costs associated with the proposals and a proposal to undertake a review of the Local Joint Committees after 12 months.

A meeting between the District and County Councils was held on 6th July 2012 to discuss the proposals in advance of its consideration by the Cabinet.

Subsequently, the Cabinet has considered the responses received to the consultation and the views of the

Working Group. In adopting the constitution for the LJC's, Executive Councillors have endorsed the trial of a pilot Local Joint Committee in the Norman Cross County division for a 12 month period and requested that the County Council and relevant Parish Councils involved in the scheme be consulted on adopting the constitution. The Cabinet were of the opinion that limiting the trial to a small area rather than the suggested nine LJC's areas would be more manageable. With regard to the existing Neighbourhood Forums, the Cabinet has authorised the Executive Deputy Leader to review urgently their format with a view to them continuing during the trial in those areas that have expressed a wish that they remain. Finally, the Cabinet has requested the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well Being) to undertake a review of the pilot scheme during its twelve months of operation.

CUSTOMER SERVICES – REVIEW OF CHANGES AT RAMSEY & YAXLEY

The outcome of a review of the impact of the Council's previous decision to reduce the opening hours at the Ramsey & Yaxley Customer Service Centres has been considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being). The Panel was of the view that the Customer Services Centres at Ramsey and Yaxley should continue to operate for two days per week at each location.

The Panel has also asked the Head of Customer Services to report on the impact of the changes as part of their normal six monthly monitoring reports.

CUSTOMER SERVICES MONITORING QUARTERLY REPORT

The Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) have considered the Customer Service

Quarterly Performance Report for the period January to March 2012. The report sets out the standards of service that have been achieved and the issues the service will face in the forthcoming quarter.

PRIVATE SECTOR RENT LEVELS

Following a request for further information at a previous meeting, the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) has received an update on rent levels in Huntingdonshire. There is currently no evidence to suggest that landlords were adjusting their rents downwards as a result of changes to the Housing Benefit System.

Having acknowledged that it was still very early days and that it was unlikely that quarterly reports would be able to demonstrate significant movements in rent levels, Members were of the view that it was important to continue to monitor the situation in the current economic climate. With this in mind, the Panel has agreed to receive further reports on a biennial basis.

LEADERSHIP DIRECTION

The Overview & Scrutiny Panels for Economic Well-Being and Environmental Well-Being have considered the content of "Leadership Direction" which has been prepared by the Executive and Deputy Executive Leader to set out their direction of travel and key milestones over the next few years. The Economic Well-Being Panel has commented on a number of the themes and aims within the document. A Member of the Environmental Well-Being Panel has suggested that residents ought to be given the opportunity to influence the Direction so that it reflects needs identified by the community.

USE OF CONSULTANTS

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) has received an update outlining the progress which has been made on agreeing, modifying and implementing their previous recommendations. Members have been pleased to note that the majority of their recommendations had been accepted in some form.

The Panel has also been provided with details of the District Council's expenditure on Consultants, Hired and Temporary Staff during 2011/12. Having sought clarification on a number of items within the expenditure, the Panel has agreed that further reports should be submitted on an annual basis.

LOCALISATION OF BUSINESS RATES

The Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) and Cabinet have been acquainted with the background to the introduction of a rates retention scheme localisation of business rates which will come into effect in April 2013. The scheme is designed to encourage Councils to be self-sufficient and to help them to support local jobs, growth and protect the most vulnerable places.

Members were advised that there was an option in the scheme for local authorities to come together to form local pools for business rates income. Having noted the benefits of forming a local pool with the County Council and other Cambridgeshire districts, the Cabinet has requested that the Department for Communities and Local Government be advised of the Council's interest in pooling on the understanding that the governance arrangements will be based on no authority losing from pooling and that

there would be the opportunity to review the decision later in the year.

THE RATIONALE FOR RESERVES

A working group comprising Councillors R B Howe, P G Mitchell, T V Rogers and M F Shellens has been established by the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) to:-

- (a) identify the combination of co-incident risks against which the Council wishes to insure by having reserves; and
- (b) to benchmark the Council's level of reserves against other appropriate Authorities.

REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL MONITORING: 2011/12 OUTTURN AND 2012/13 BUDGET

The Cabinet has noted the final outturn for revenue and expenditure in 2011/12 and variations already identified in the current year. Executive Councillors were pleased to note that as a result of under spending the Council has been successful in saving an additional £2.5 million in reserves.

Executive Councillors also have been apprised of variations in the capital programme in the current year and adjustments in the 2012/13 budget.

RISK REGISTER

In line with the Council's Risk Management Strategy, the Cabinet has noted the options available to manage six risks identified as very high or red in the Corporate Risk Register. The risks relate to various activities including IT business continuity plans, ICT security and changes in Government funding

POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

The establishment of a Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Panel as a Joint Committee of the local authorities has been supported by the Cabinet. The Panel will have an important role in scrutinising the new Police and Crime Commissioner. It will be made up of representatives from the seven Cambridgeshire Local Authorities plus one co-optee. The Cabinet has appointed the Executive Leader as the District Council's representative on the Panel with the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) as his substitute.

With regard to the Panel arrangements and associated terms of reference, the Cabinet has endorsed their substance and have authorised the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to finalise the precise wording as necessary.

BEARSCROFT FARM URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) has received the Draft Urban Design Framework (UDF) for land at Bearscroft Farm, Godmanchester. The UDF is intended to provide constructive guidance to future developers of the area to the maximum advantage and minimum disadvantage to local residents. A Member has expressed the view that Godmanchester does not have the infrastructure to serve a large scale development. Furthermore, the A1198 could be negatively affected by the proposed development. Members have been advised that the UDF was the subject of consultation which has enabled residents to have input into the design of development.

Having considered the options within the UDF, several Members have expressed a preference for Idea 5 which proposes that a new road is

constructed around the southern edge of the development. This will allow for a greater developed area and enable the football pitch and other green spaces to be completely integrated with the rest of the development. Members have expressed concerns at the UDFs lack of provision of a secondary school and highlighted the need to ensure there is a safe route for pupils to take to their chosen school. In its role as a consultee, the Development Management Panel has formulated a series of comments on the draft UDF which will be endorsed by the Panel at its meeting in August for submission to the Cabinet.

GROWING AWARENESS – A PLAN FOR OUR ENVIRONMENT

Both the Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) have considered the Council's Plan for making continual, measurable progress in reducing its own resource use and for stimulating environmental improvements in the wider district. The Panel has also reviewed the Council's progress against targets so far and noted that energy usage has decreased by 18% across the Council's portfolio.

Members were acquainted with the details of the Green Deal, which is due to be launched in the coming months. As Councils will be best placed to promote the scheme Members have stressed the importance of ensuring that the Council provides the best value options for householders. The Panel has also recommended that, as far as possible, local traders should be used to deliver installations.

Attention has been drawn to the fact that the Council has not achieved its target of a 9.5% reduction in the cubic metres of water consumed by Council buildings. Members have been assured that this will become a priority of the Environment Team and will continue to

be carefully monitored. Specific reference has also been made to the increase in the percentage of Council employees travelling to work by car and the slow progress in reducing the amount of waste recycled from the Council's headquarters. This has highlighted that continual efforts need to be made to reinforce the activities designed to achieve targets. In particular, reference has been made to the need to promote the Council's home working policy and its travel plan.

WASTE COLLECTION POLICIES

The updated Waste Collection Policies have been received by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being). The Policies have been co-ordinated and some changes have been suggested. The Waste Collection Policies are intended to provide clarity to residents as to the type and extent of service that they can expect. Members have welcomed the fact that the Council's Waste Collection Policies are now available in a single document.

The Panel has endorsed the proposal to provide paper sacks for food/green waste to properties currently receiving weekly bag collections, so that they can be collected fortnightly to fit in with the normal collections and save on additional vehicles and crew having to collect every other week. Members have also supported the proposal to collect non-hazardous clinical waste with the normal grey bin collection, which will result in further savings. The Panel has recommended that the Council should provide and publicise guidance on how items, which are prohibited from wheeled bin and sacks, should be disposed of. With regard to Policy 22, which prohibits stickers on wheeled bins, Members have expressed a view that these stickers could provide an opportunity to convey messages, such as local speed restrictions. This approach is taken by

South Cambridgeshire District Council and is supported by the Police. Having noted that a pilot initiative is taking place in Huntingdonshire, the Panel has recommended that, subject to feedback from the local community, this practice should be adopted in Huntingdonshire.

The Panel has discussed the feasibility of removing the purple stickers on wheeled bins which identify residents who require assistance. Members have raised concerns that this practice identifies vulnerable residents and could potentially create a crime hazard.

Having been advised of the Panel's views, the Cabinet has endorsed the content of the document. With regard to the prohibition of stickers on bins, Executive Councillors reiterated that they were not in favour of notices being attached to bins. On the issue of purple stickers, the Cabinet was of the opinion that there was no evidence that this identifies vulnerable residents and referred to developments in technology which will soon enable collection crews to identify such properties using equipment in their cabs.

NEW HUNTINGDONSHIRE LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Both the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) and Cabinet have received a report on the consultation and engagement process for the preparation of a new Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036. Members have been advised that the Local Plan presents them with an opportunity to influence how land will be allocated and have noted the next steps in the consultation and plan making process.

In welcoming an extended strategy and policy consultation period the Cabinet has authorised Officers to proceed to the Strategy and Consultation Stage,

using appropriate consultation material, the content of which to be agreed by the Head of Planning and Housing Strategy after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing.

PLANNING IMPLICATIONS OF THE ENTERPRISE ZONE

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) has received a presentation by Mr P Mumford, Special Projects Manager (Alconbury) on the planning implications of the Enterprise Zone. The consultation process for development at the site will be extensive and exceed the standard consultation requirements. Members have been advised that the Local Enterprise Partnership will be looking to provide 'transformational employment' at the site. Subsequently there is a possibility that commuting patterns across the District will change as traffic towards Cambridge and London could be reduced. The Head of Planning & Housing Strategy has acknowledged that traffic management on the site will be a key factor in ensuring its success.