

Decision Digest

Edition 129

Monthly summary of the decisions taken at meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny and other Panels for the period 1st to 23rd November 2012.

CHARGING FOR A SECOND GREEN BIN

As a way to increase the Council's income, the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) has considered a proposal to introduce a charge for second green bins. The matter also has been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) who unanimously agreed that the Council should not introduce a charge. The Cabinet subsequently referred the matter to the Economic Well-Being Panel for further consideration.

The Economic Well-Being Panel discussed the matter at length and has asked a number of questions of the Executive Councillor for the Environment and the Head of Operations. The Panel also noted representations made by Councillors I C Bates, P L E Bucknell and Mrs M Banerjee.

Having agreed that the business case for the additional charge was sound, Members were of the opinion that it should be considered as part of a package of savings. A recommendation has been put to Cabinet to this effect.

In considering the views of both Panels, the Cabinet has stressed that the Council was constantly reviewing all services to identify savings and that difficult budgetary decisions will need to be made in the future. The Cabinet has approved in principle the introduction of

a charge for a second green bin and has delegated the timing of its implementation to the Managing Director (Communities, Partnerships and Projects) after consultation with the Executive Leader and the Executive Councillor for Environment. This is to be in association with a package of other savings measures to be decided no later than April 2013.

ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE

The Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) has received a report outlining the Council's proposed arrangements for dealing with applications for listing community assets. The legislation has been introduced to assist local community groups preserve buildings or land which they consider to be important to the community's social well-being.

Having requested some clarification on specific aspects of the proposal and the ways in which Parish Council's and other interested charities had been made aware of the new legislation, the Panel endorsed recommendations designed to establish a formal process for considering applications.

These conclusions have subsequently been referred to the Cabinet who have:

- delegated responsibility for receiving and processing applications to the Corporate Team Manager;

- delegated responsibility for determining whether an asset should be listed to a Panel of three appropriate Council Officers;
- agreed that the responsibility for determining reviews against listing of assets by the owners be delegated to the Head of Planning and Housing Strategy after consultation with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services;
- agreed that the responsibility for putting in place appropriate arrangements for determining requests for compensation and review be delegated to the Corporate Team Manager; and
- asked the Corporate Team Manager to put in place arrangements for publishing how applicable groups can make a nomination.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT – KEY FINDINGS

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) has received a presentation by the Economic Development Manager on the outcome of the local economic assessment. The assessment had been undertaken to provide an evidence base for a new Economic Strategy. A review of the Strategy was being undertaken to coincide with the creation of a new Local Plan for the District and to reflect a number of significant changes since the last review – namely the impact of the recession and the establishment of the local enterprise zone.

In noting that the data had been grouped into 3 themes – People and Communities, Business and Enterprise and Sustainable Economic Growth, the Panel has discussed a number of the

specific findings and has noted the action priorities which had been identified.

Having been informed that work would now be undertaken to draw up the new Strategy, the Panel has asked the Economic Development Manager to present the Strategy and associated action plans in the Spring.

CORPORATE BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANNING (2012 ANNUAL REPORT)

An update on progress in planning for Corporate Business Continuity for the District Council has been presented to the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being). This presentation included information on the processes and proposed maintenance of a new Corporate Business Continuity Plan. A report on the incidents which had ‘triggered’ action by the Business Continuity Team during the previous 12 months also was provided.

In considering the report, the Panel has commented on the recent problems with the Remote My Office System and asked about the process for testing the Corporate Plan. An amendment has also been suggested to the approach for identifying the corporate lead if the Plan needed to be implemented.

APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBER – OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMIC WELL-BEING)

The outcome of a Selection Panel which met on 7th November 2012 to interview candidates for the vacant position of co-opted Member has been reported to the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being).

The Panel has subsequently asked the Council to accept the co-option of Mr R Eacott to the Overview and Scrutiny

Panel (Economic Well-Being) for a four year term of office.

POTENTIAL MERGER BETWEEN CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND SUFFOLK FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) has received details of a consultation on proposals for further collaboration up to a full merger between Cambridgeshire and Suffolk Fire and Rescue Services. Councillor F Brown, Chairman of the Cambridgeshire Fire Authority and Mr M Warren, Director of Resources and Treasurer to the Fire Authority presented the proposals to the Panel. Preliminary views on the consultation will be incorporated within the draft response. This will be submitted to the Panel at its next meeting.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU

Following on from the last meeting, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) received a further update on recent developments concerning the voluntary liquidisation of the Huntingdonshire Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). Whilst it was hoped that the service would cease to operate at the end of the calendar year, it was understood that this date had now been brought forward to the end of November. It was noted that arrangements would be made to identify interim arrangements for December and the period January – March 2013. These will be determined after the relevant Executive Councillors meet to consider the applications received under the Council's new voluntary sector funding arrangements.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE TOWN AND PARISH CHARTER

A copy of the draft Town and Parish Charter was received by the Overview

and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being). The document sets out how the three tiers of local government will work together for the benefit of local communities, whilst recognising and respecting their individual rights as separate democratic bodies. As guidance is yet to be issued from the Department for Communities and Local Government, it is not likely that the Charter will be ready for endorsement until April 2013. A Working Group, comprising representatives of the three tiers of local government has been established to develop the Charter document.

CONSIDERATION OF DOMESTIC ABUSE JOINT MEMBER-LED REVIEW: FINAL REPORT

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) has received feedback from the Huntingdonshire Community Safety Partnership on the findings of the joint Member-led review on domestic abuse by Cambridgeshire County Council and Huntingdonshire and Fenland District Councils. Attention was drawn to the Partnership's concerns regarding the action plan developed for the Domestic Abuse Steering Group and the lack of funding currently available for the service. It was made clear to the Panel that the links between domestic abuse and social services at Partnership meetings needed strengthening. This might be achieved by ensuring that there was appropriate representation at Partnership meetings.

HOUGHTON AND WYTON CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER ASSESSMENT AND BOUNDARY REVIEW

Both the Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) have reviewed the Houghton and Wyton Conservation Area Character Assessment and Boundary

Review. The Character Assessment and Boundary Review have been produced in response to an undertaking given to Houghton and Wyton Parish Council. Representations have been received that Area 2 – a field to the east of Houghton Grange (BBSRC) should be included in the Conservation Area. However, the Head of Planning and Housing Strategy has advised that this area does not meet the Conservation Area criteria. It has been explained that its inclusion might undermine the validity of the Character Assessment. Members have been assured that the Conservation Area Character Assessment is needed to reinforce the urban design framework (UDF). If the UDF is implemented, Area 2 will be of a standard that will make it eligible for inclusion in the Conservation Area. A Member has argued that, in this case, the opportunity should be taken to include it at this stage. However, given that this might undermine the ability of the Conservation Area Character Assessment to withstand a legal challenge, it has been accepted that this matter should be re-visited when the obstacles to its inclusion have been removed. With this in mind, the Cabinet has stressed that it is best practice to keep boundaries under view for all conservation areas and that this will continue.

In its role as consultee and following representations made by the local Ward Councillor, the Development Management Panel also has endorsed the content of both documents and recommended to the Cabinet that they be formally adopted as Council policy.

Having considered all the responses received and the views of both Panels the Cabinet has approved the contents of the Character Assessment and Boundary Review.

CONTROLLED REGULATIONS

WASTE

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) has considered a report on controlled waste regulations. The Controlled Waste Regulations 2012 have varied the premises which are exempt from a charge for disposal. This Council collects waste from a number of previously exempt premises and consequently will now be charged by the County Council for the disposal of that waste. Members have been assured that the majority of customers will continue to enjoy free disposal if they were Council customers prior to April 2012. The Panel has discussed the possibility of offering and promoting an enhanced trade waste service as a means of generating income for the Council. There will be a marginal cost in providing such a service as the Council already has waste collection rounds in place. Given the financial pressures on the Council, it has been suggested that the development of the trade waste service should be investigated.

Subsequently, the Cabinet has authorised Officers to recover the full cost of disposal from those non-domestic premises previously exempt under the 1992 Controlled Waste Regulations, except where they continue to be exempt under the County Council's local policy.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF AGRICULTURE TO THE ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY IN THE CONTEXT OF PLANNING POLICIES

The final report of the Working Group has been received by the Overview and Scrutiny (Environmental Well-Being) Panel. Members have been advised that the report's recommendations have been endorsed by the Head of Planning and Housing Strategy.

Having considered the Panel's findings the Cabinet has –

- agreed to consider within the new Local Plan the need for community led growth in rural villages to contribute towards their sustainability;
- requested that definitions of green field and brown field sites be consistently applied;
- agreed that the new Local Plan should refer to the National Planning Policy Framework's principles relating to the rural economy and agricultural land;
- requested that further investigations be undertaken into the Council's procedure for analysing and dealing with applications where agriculture is a factor and a report submitted to the Development Management Panel on the outcome.

STATEMENT OF GAMBLING PRINCIPLES

The Cabinet has reviewed the contents of a revised Statement of Principles under the Gambling Act 2005. The Statement has been updated to take into account the latest regulations and guidance issued by the Gambling Commission.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AREA JOINT COMMITTEE

The Cabinet has appointed Councillor C R Hyams to replace Councillor S Akthar on the Huntingdonshire Traffic Management Area Joint Committee.

