
Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being)

Report of the meeting held on 11th December 2012

Matters for Information

32. CHARGING FOR A SECOND GREEN BIN

Pursuant to Item No. 18 of its Report to the meeting of the Council held on 14th November 2012 and following publication of the Cabinet's decision on 22nd November 2012 regarding options for charging for a second green bin, the Panel called-in the matter for further consideration. The Panel was disappointed that its previous recommendation had not been accepted by the Cabinet and, at the Panel's invitation, Councillors J D Ablewhite and D M Tysoe as Executive Leader of the Council and appropriate Executive Councillor respectively attended the meeting when the call-in was discussed.

The three Members who called in the item felt that the decision reached by the Cabinet was "ambiguous" and "unclear" and that a formal assessment should be made of the environmental impacts of the proposals. Furthermore, a list of all the possible savings that the Council was proposing to make and how these will be prioritised was requested.

The Panel was advised that it is intended to review all the Council's options for making savings and increasing income, including the proposal to charge for collecting second green bins, later in the year. If no alternatives are identified, the scheme will proceed. However, the Panel is of the view that if a comprehensive exercise is to be undertaken to review the Council's finances, it is premature to make an "in principle" decision on one item.

In response to a question on what other options for savings have been considered, the Panel was advised that approximately £1m had already been saved and others were being considered. The Council has adopted the Leadership Direction, one of the targets of which is to achieve a balanced budget. To do this, savings in the order of £3.2m will be required by 2017/18. All options, therefore, are being examined. The Executive Leader has given an undertaking that he will keep Members informed of progress in this respect.

The Panel understands the need for savings and accept that the current proposal may need to be implemented. Members are, however, of the view that a judgement cannot be made on charging for collecting second green bins unless they have a comprehensive

assessment of all the Council's options. They have asked the Cabinet to produce a list of all possible savings and to prioritise them. Councillor T V Rogers has indicated that the Economic Well-Being Panel also advocates this approach. In addition, it has been suggested that a list of savings already made is produced to assist the decision making process.

Members have received clarification of a number of operational matters connected with the proposal, including whether churches and villages halls will be charged, if any operational savings will be achieved and when particular bins will be collected. They have suggested a price analysis is required.

Having discussed the decision fully, the Panel has referred it back to Cabinet for further consideration. The Cabinet has been recommended to note the proposal to charge for collecting second green bins and to consider it during its deliberations on all the Council's options for improving its financial position.

The Panel's deliberations have been considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 13th December 2012, details of which are set out in its Report to this meeting (Item No. 51 refers).

33. ROUND RESCHEDULING

The Panel has been advised of the background to the rescheduling of the current waste collection rounds. The rounds were last reviewed in 2007. The Executive Councillor for Environment has advised that any changes arising from the review are due to be implemented by the Council in February 2013. Whilst it had been anticipated that the review might result in the loss of one waste collection round, having taken into account property growth levels within the District, this is not likely to be possible as it would mean reinstating this round at a later date. With this in mind, the purpose of the review, therefore, is to make the service more effective and efficient, whilst providing an opportunity for the Council to reiterate some of its key waste and recycling messages to the residents of Huntingdonshire. One of the key savings expected from the review are those relating to fuel consumption, which will provide a further environmental benefit for the Council.

Owing to IT related problems with the software utilised to assist with round rescheduling process, the revised rounds are now scheduled to go live on 25th February 2013. All Members will receive an information pack outlining the changes prior to any publicity being undertaken on the new rounds. The Panel has welcomed the Communications Plan developed to publicise the changes, in particular those aspects relating to educating residents on what materials can and cannot be recycled through their blue bins.

34. CARBON MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

The Panel has been acquainted with the background to the Carbon Management Plan, which is currently in its third year of operation.

Members are encouraged to note that the Council is on target to achieve a 30% reduction in CO2 emissions from the Council's estate by 2013/14. To date, a 20% reduction has been achieved. A saving of £300,000 has been realised and a further saving of £700,000 is expected to be made by 2013/14.

The Panel has discussed whether the target of 30% was regarded as being stretching at the time the Plan was developed, the role of the Council's Environmental Resource Efficiency Group in cross departmental working, particularly within the Operations Division and across the One Leisure sites, and the receipt of an interest free Salix loan to assist with energy efficiency improvements at One Leisure, St Ives. Other matters discussed include the impact of the solar photovoltaic PV panels at Eastfield House and the emergence of environmental initiatives which might generate a financial return to the Council. The Head of Environmental Management has undertaken to clarify the figures reported relating to the cost and savings identified for pool covers across the One Leisure sites and to establish whether the overall savings figures take account of inflation.

The Panel has congratulated the Head of Environmental Management and his staff on the valuable contributions they have made in achieving the carbon reduction target. The Cabinet has been recommended to note the excellent progress that has been made towards the implementation of the Council's Carbon Management Plan and the positive impact this has had on reducing energy use and energy spending. The Cabinet was further recommended to support ongoing cross-departmental working to maximise cost savings and the continued use of the Salix ring-fenced funding and Environment Strategy Capital funding to implement further energy saving projects.

Other Matters of Interest

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

The Panel has reviewed its programme of studies. Members have been informed that owing to resource constraints within the Planning department alternative ways of finalising the Tree Strategy are being looked at and Councillor I C Bates has undertaken to make enquiries with Hilton Parish Council with regard to the wheelie bin sticker pilot in the village. The Design Principles for Future Developments Working Group will meet once the draft revised Design Guide is available. Having regard to drainage issues previously experienced in St Audrey's Lane, St Ives, Councillor J W Davies has confirmed that the recent flooding events have not had a negative impact upon residents within the Town.

36. WORK PLAN STUDIES

The Panel has received details of the studies being undertaken by the other Overview and Scrutiny Panels. A scoping report on green waste and energy generation will be submitted to the Panel at a future meeting.

37. NOTICE OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Panel has been acquainted with the current Notice of Executive Decisions and requested sight of the Revision of the Wind Power Supplementary Planning Document at its January 2013 meeting.

38. SCRUTINY

The Panel has considered the latest edition of the Decision Digest and discussed the matters contained therein.

D Harty
Chairman