

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMIC WELL-BEING) held in Meeting Room 0.1A/B, Pathfinder House, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Thursday, 14 November 2013.

PRESENT: Councillor T V Rogers – Chairman.

Councillors P L E Bucknell, G J Bull,
E R Butler, R Harrison, P G Mitchell,
M F Shellens and A H Williams.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors S Cawley, K J Churchill and S Greenall.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Mrs L Kadić and R J West.

51. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

52. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to:-

- a) the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information); and
- b) consultation or negotiations in connection with labour relations between the Council and its employees.

53. FACING THE FUTURE 2013

(a) Information Management Division

Councillor B S Chapman, Executive Councillor for Customer Services, was in attendance for this item).

(At 20.05pm during the discussion on this item, Councillor G J Bull left the meeting).

(At 20.35pm during the discussion on this item, Councillor M F Shellens left the meeting).

The Panel considered the Strategic Service Review template for the Information Management Division (a copy of which is

appended in the annex to the Minute Book). To assist the Panel with its deliberations a breakdown of other expenditure in IMD Developments and IMD Operations was circulated.

By way of introduction, the Executive Councillor informed the Panel that the Information Management Division (IMD) had received excellent user ratings. He outlined some of the work that the Division undertook, together with the investigations which were currently being carried out on the changes that might be made to this work.

Having been reminded that the Division supported the delivery of other strategies approved by the Council, Members asked a number of questions regarding the operation of the Service. Amongst the issues discussed were the responsibility for the IMD project programme, the arrangements for funding IT projects, IT equipment and systems and the projects which were being undertaken by the Division. Members requested a copy of the existing ICT Strategy and a list of the current projects, including their cost, state of progress and financial impact. They also examined the revenue generated by the service.

Although the Panel was of the opinion that the options listed in the template should be investigated, given that many other services would be requiring additional assistance from IMD to deliver their own savings, Members expressed reservations about the expected timescale of some of them. Early implementation could be more costly. In response to a number of other concerns, Members were advised of the potential benefits which could be obtained through the proposed course of action and assured that no decision would be made unless it was established that it would provide the best benefit for the Authority. It was suggested that the Council should continue to maintain a reserve position which might provide the required extra resilience. If it was decided not to proceed with the preferred approach, the Council would re-visit the other options for savings. Further information would be required for this purpose.

The Panel received an explanation of the staffing arrangements within the Development Team, expenditure on Hired Staff and the benefits which had been obtained from the Cambridgeshire Public Services Network (CPSN). Having been reminded that the Division supported all the Council's statutory duties, Members commented that it had played a key role in achieving efficiency savings for other areas of the Council, which had not been recognised within the template. The Panel requested further information on the impact of reducing or ceasing activities in other areas of the Council on the IMD division.

The Panel discussed and challenged some of the Facing the Future themes within the template. This included the need to introduce efficiencies before alternative means of service

delivery were considered, the approach that had been adopted to website design, the resources provided to Members and the Service's standards of operation.

Chairman