

## Decision Digest

Edition 141

**Monthly summary of the decisions taken at meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny and other Panels for the period 2nd to 28 January 2014.**

### **REDESIGN OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) received a presentation from representatives of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust on local mental health services in Huntingdonshire following a redesign of the service in 2011/12.

A number of questions were raised and responded to at the meeting. Details of the service user group, a list of voluntary organisations commissioned by the CCG, the number of Huntingdonshire patients admitted within acute facilities, a précis of the types of referrals made by GPs to the Advice and Referral Centre and the performance statistics for the Centre in its first few months of operation are to be made available to Members outside of the meeting.

Representatives of the service user group are to be invited to attend a future Panel meeting. This will enable Members to gain an understanding of local residents' experience of mental health services.

### **PROCUREMENT OF OLDER PEOPLE'S PROGRAMME**

An update on the procurement exercise currently being undertaken on the Older People's programme was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel

(Social Well-Being). Concerns still exist over the tight timescales proposed and the absence of any elected Member representation from the procurement process.

Questions were raised over the quality of the services to be provided. Other matters discussed included the need to ensure that the successful bidder will meet local need, the transformation of primary care services, the added social value that the procurement will bring to the community and the role of the voluntary sector in the procurement process.

As the Council's representative on the procurement exercise, the views of the Head of Environmental and Community Health Services will be requested on the best way of providing further feedback to the Panel on the procurement exercise.

### **RECONNECTIONS POLICY FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE WITH NO LOCAL CONNECTION**

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) has endorsed the content of a Reconnections Policy for Homeless People with No Local Connection. The policy formalises the practices already undertaken by the Council in its homeless prevention work. Assurances were given that homeless individuals were not being displaced into other local authority areas and that they were not being reconnected with friends and family against their will.

Subsequently, the Cabinet has approved the content of the policy.

### **DISCHARGING A HOMELESSNESS DUTY THROUGH THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR**

The content of a policy which allows the Council to end its “duty” to a household accepted as homeless by making an offer of suitable private rented sector accommodation was endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being). These powers were introduced under the Localism Act 2011.

Subsequently, the Cabinet has approved the content of the policy.

### **CAMBRIDGESHIRE ADULTS, WELLBEING AND HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Councillor J W G Pethard has updated the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) on matters currently being considered by the Cambridgeshire Adults, Well-Being and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee which include the Adult Social Care, Older People and Mental Health Services Business Plans, an update on the Commissioning of Older People’s Services and Sheltered Housing at Langley Court and Langley Close, St Ives.

### **FACING THE FUTURE**

The Overview and Scrutiny Panels have received an update from the Scrutiny Chairmen on the Facing the Future process. Joint Chairmen met on 18th December to review the complete list of potential savings and the priorities which were accorded. Further meetings were held on 9th and 16th January. Separately, the Cabinet has

held an informal Away Day to consider their own approach to the Panels’ deliberations. A report will be submitted to Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet in February for further discussion.

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT SHARED SERVICES**

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel has received a presentation on Local Government Shared Services (LGSS) to which all Members of the Council were invited. The presentation was provided by LGSS’ Directors of Law, Property & Governance and IT Services.

As part of the presentation, information was provided on the scope and services of LGSS, their customers and partners and the work which was ongoing to develop a business Case for sharing Information Technology and Legal Services with the District Council.

Members were given the opportunity to ask questions and these were responded to at the meeting.

### **RENEWAL OF GREAT FEN PROJECT COLLABORATION AGREEMENT**

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) has supported the renewal of the Great Fen Project Collaboration Agreement for a further 5 year period. Members noted the economic benefits the Project brings to the District and have expressed their satisfaction with the role of the Steering Group in governing the work of the Project.

Having been advised of the Panel’s views, the Cabinet has approved the renewal of the Agreement for a further 5 years, after which time the Council’s involvement in the project will be reviewed.

### **HUNTINGDONSHIRE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP GROWTH AND INFRASTRUCTURE THEMATIC GROUP**

An update on the work of the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership – Growth and Infrastructure Thematic Group was reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being). The Group's main role is to identify key infrastructure projects within the District and to recommend priorities for the allocation of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding for these projects to the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership Board and the Cabinet. The Panel has discussed the difficulties in securing a Town/Parish Council representative on the Group, whether the Council was already in receipt of CIL funding from developers and the governance arrangements in place for the bidding process.

### **STREET NAMING AND NUMBERING – IMPLEMENTATION OF CHARGES**

The Cabinet has approved the introduction of charging for Street Naming and Numbering services. From 1st April 2014 the renaming of an existing street will be charged at £250 per street plus £10 per affected property and a name change for an existing property will be £50. The charges will be reviewed in 12 months.

### **PAY REVIEW FRAMEWORK**

The Cabinet has approved a new pay model for all Council employees which will be implemented from 1st April 2014. The model will replace an existing scheme which is regarded as not being financially sustainable and inequitable leaving the Council at risk of equal pay claims. The Managing Director has been authorised, in

consultation with the Executive Leader, to implement the necessary changes to individual's pay and grading arrangements. The changes will effect all 692 permanent employees of the Council with 42.3% enduring a pay reduction and 57.5% experiencing a neutral impact or an increase in salary. Staff will have the right of appeal against their grading and provision has been made for pay protection of 3 months full pay or 6 months half if the employee prefers.

The Cabinet also approved the removal of Essential User Allowance for Senior Managers and attendance allowances for certain operations staff with effect from 1st April 2014.

Whilst the changes will result in an additional cost in 2014/15 of £184k, savings will follow in subsequent years rising to £452k by 2020/21. However, when compared to the current budget provision, there will be a saving of £776k in 2014/15 rising to £2,017k in 2020/21.

### **STAFF TURNOVER - IMPACT ON DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SERVICE**

The Development Management Panel has been advised of the action proposed to ensure continued delivery of the Development Management Service in the period pending appointment to four posts which are to become vacant before March 2014. The arrangements include a temporary variation to the Panel's scheme of delegation which will enable Development Management Officers to determine, within prescribed criteria, certain types of application including householder development, change of use, advertisement and listed building consent where there have been either no objections or letters of support. The Panel has been assured that the Executive Councillor for Planning &

Housing Strategy and its Chairman will continue to monitor the situation.

### **REFUNDS OF PLANNING APPLICATION AND RESERVED MATTERS APPLICATION FEES**

The Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications, Deemed Applications, Requests and Site Visits) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 which came into force on 1st October 2013 requires the repayment of any fee paid in respect of an application for planning permission or approval of reserved matters if the local planning authority has failed to determine the application within 26 weeks of a valid application being received. This requirement can be waived if the applicant and the planning authority has agreed, in writing, that the application can be determined within an extended period.

Although the majority of applications are determined in less than 26 weeks, the Development Management Panel has noted that procedures have been put in place to manage a situation where the District Council has been unable to determine a matter within the timescale through no fault of its own. In these circumstances, the Panel has noted that future reports to them might seek authority to extend the period for determination or require the completion of a Section 106 Agreement, for example, within a prescribed timescale.

### **DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS**

At the January meeting, the Development Management Panel determined nine applications for principally minor development of which eight were approved and one refused.

### **HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE LAW REFORMS**

The Licensing and Protection Panel has been informed of a review being carried out by the Law Commission on behalf of the Government into hackney carriage (taxi) and private hire licensing. The review, which was recommended by the House of Commons Transport Select Committee following a high court challenge involving cross border leasing, involved a four month consultation.

Although an interim statement setting out the key decisions was published in April 2013, the final report and draft Bill is not expected until 2014 and until further information is released a full assessment of the revenue and resource implications cannot be made.

### **DRIVING STANDARDS AGENCY – DRIVER TESTING**

The Licensing and Protection Panel has been updated on the significant improvement in the waiting times for Driving Standards Agency (DSA) testing in recent months. The Panel had asked to be updated on the situation following complaints from operators in early 2013 following the Panel's decision to transfer driver testing for hackney carriage and private hire driver's from in house to the nationally recognised tests. Members were advised that in both Cambridge and Bedford the waiting time for tests had been reduced to within a week.

### **MOBILE HOMES ACT 2013**

The Licensing and Protection Panel has authorised the Head of Environmental Health Services after consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Panel to determine and publish a fees policy, issue licences and enforce the provisions of the Mobile Homes Act 2013 as appropriate.

The Act which amends the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960, the Caravan Sites Act 1968 and the Mobile Homes Act 1983 was considered necessary because the previous law was ineffective and outdated. The requirements regarding site rules provide for greater transparency on pitch reviews and aims to address sale blocking and poor site conditions.

The Act came into effect on 26 May 2013 and enforcement of the new licensing regime will commence on 1 April 2014.

## **THE FOOD SAFETY AND HYGIENE (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2013**

The Licensing and Protection Panel has provided the Head of Environmental Health Services with the appropriate authority to enforce the provisions of and initiate prosecutions under the Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013.

The Regulations are the amalgamation of two national Statutory Instruments (SIs) covering food safety and food hygiene. The changes, which will not result in any new powers or duties for the Authority, were brought about following concerns raised by food businesses that it can be difficult to find food safety law and food hygiene law relevant to them.