

## Decision Digest

Edition 143

**Monthly summary of the decisions taken at meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny and other Panels for the period 1st to 21st March 2014.**

### **TRANSFER OF CREATIVEXCHANGE, LONGSANDS CAMPUS**

Together with the Cabinet, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) has discussed a number of options for the future use and ownership of the Creativexchange building in St Neots. The Panel has made a recommendation to the Cabinet and requested that a review be carried out on the lessons which could be learned from the Creativexchange project, including the expenditure which had been incurred.

Having been advised of the Panel's views, the Cabinet concurred with the Scrutiny Panel and agreed to surrender the lease for the building to Longsands Academy authorising the Strategic Assessment Estates Officer to negotiate a lease for the land (which the District Council owns) including the car parking spaces, with the Academy for a peppercorn rent.

### **LOVES FARM COMMUNITY CENTRE**

An update on the development of the Loves Farm Community Centre has been presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being). An agreement has now been made with Cambridgeshire County Council for the provision of a joint building to deliver a community and pre-school facility.

Having been reminded that this will be an essential facility for the local community, the Panel discussed a number of related issues including the financing of the scheme, use of the new building and parking arrangements. Members also discussed the potential financial risk to the District Council should the local community group be unable to generate sufficient income from the facility.

With this in mind, the Panel has suggested that the Loves Farm Community Group should be asked to prepare a Business Plan for the operation of the Centre, prior to any sub-letting arrangement being entered into with the District Council. To enable lessons to be learnt from this experience, Members have also suggested that a post event audit should be undertaken to enable lessons to be learnt from this exercise.

### **CUSTOMER SERVICES MONITORING**

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) has considered the Customer Services Performance report for the period July to December 2013. The report sets out the standards of service that have been achieved and the issues the service will face in the forthcoming period.

In considering the report, the Panel has discussed a range of matters including the delivery of the new Customer

Services Strategy and that the data appeared to demonstrate that the 'quick and easy' transactions were moving to self-service methods. A number of questions were raised by Panel Members with regard to waiting times at the Huntingdon Customer Service Centre, the possible future move of the Call Centre Team to Pathfinder House and staff retention.

### **BRIEFING ON NATIONAL NON DOMESTIC RATES**

The Head of Customer Services briefed the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) on National Non Domestic Rates. Members were able to ask a number of detailed question which were responded to at the meeting.

### **SIX MONTH MONITORING REPORT ON ORGANISATIONS IN RECEIPT OF THREE YEAR GRANT AID AWARDS**

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) has been apprised of the outcome of the Voluntary Sector Working Group's meetings with each of the Voluntary Organisations in October 2013. The Group reviewed their performance of the organisations in the first six months of the 2013/14 financial year.

It was evident to the Panel that the Working Group needs to continue its investigations as a number of issues were raised during the Panel's discussions. These included - how the organisations could work under a common structure in the future and that further review meetings with each should take place at the end of the financial year.

### **CENTRE FOR PUBLIC SCRUTINY – POLICE AND CRIME PANELS: THE FIRST YEAR**

The Centre for Public Scrutiny's report on Police and Crime Panels was

received by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being). Members also received an update on the work of the Panel from Councillor J D Ablewhite, the Council's representative.

Owing to concerns that exist over the Police and Crime Commissioner's lack of engagement with the public, the Panel has asked Officers to submit questions on behalf of the Panel to the Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Panel at its meeting on 19th March 2014.

### **LOCALISM**

Further to the Parish Conference held back in December 2013, the Panel has considered how the Council should respond to the issues which had been raised.

A suggestion was made that the Council should encourage Parishes to engage in Community Planning, a view which is strongly supported by Councillor R B Howe, Executive Councillor for Healthy and Active Communities. A number of views were expressed and after much discussion, the Panel agreed that the Cabinet should be requested to develop the work initiated at the Parish Conference and to consider the establishment of a scheme for funding for Parishes, including grants, as a means of encouraging and supporting them in developing Community Plans.

### **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SOCIAL WELL-BEING) – PROGRESS**

Councillors R C Carter, S J Criswell, Mrs P A Jordan, J W G Pethard and S M Van De Kerkhove have been appointed to a Working Group tasked with formulating a draft response to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group's public

consultation on the Commissioning of the Older Peoples Programme.

A further Working Group has been established to investigate the policies and procedures of Registered Social Landlords with a view to establishing a common policy/procedure when dealing with the District Council. Councillors I J Curtis, R Fuller, P Kadewere and S M Van De Kerkhove comprise the membership of the Working Group.

### **RECAP OVERVIEW AND PROGRESS TOWARDS A WHOLE WASTE SYSTEMS APPROACH**

A detailed presentation was delivered by the RECAP Partnership Manager to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being). The presentation included details of the current outcomes achieved and ongoing delivery of projects and efficiencies across the Partnership.

Matters discussed include the role of the Panel in the Partnership's work, the risks associated with the joint procurement of services for the bulking, sorting and onward processing of recyclable materials, the differing waste practices employed by Partner authorities and the need to generate awareness amongst Members and the public over what happens to recyclable and residual waste after it is collected from households.

A report from RECAP is expected in the summer on cross border route optimisation. The Panel will have sight of this report when it is available.

### **FLOOD PREVENTION**

Representatives of the Environment Agency delivered a presentation on the Flood Risk Management activities undertaken by the organisation in respect of Huntingdonshire.

The Panel received details of the Risk Management Authorities in Huntingdonshire, the roles of the Lead Local Flood Authority and Environment Agency, the various flood management schemes in Huntingdonshire, future areas of work, details of Internal Drainage Board schemes and the types of maintenance work undertaken by the Agency within the District.

Matters discussed by the Panel include the dredging of rivers, the role of the Agency in responding to planning applications, the differences between fluvial flooding and surface water flooding, the powers of the Agency in undertaking enforcement and prosecution action and the insurance related support that could be provided to homeowners who have been affected by flooding.

A scoping report on how the Panel will pursue the study further will be submitted to the April 2014 meeting.

### **CABINET FEEDBACK: FACING THE FUTURE**

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) has noted the deliberations of the Cabinet on the first phase of the Facing the Future process.

### **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING) – PROGRESS**

In order to enhance their understanding of what happens to both recyclable and residual waste, the Panel has agreed to undertake a site visit to Waterbeach Waste Management Plant.

### **HACKNEY CARRIAGE FARES**

In accordance with the provisions of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations

2000, the Cabinet has approved a table of fares for hackney carriages.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services has been authorised, after consultation with the relevant Executive Portfolio Holder, to approve future hackney carriage fare tables and to consider any objections arising from these.

#### **ADDITION OF INFORMATION ON CIL TO 'LOCAL LIST' VALIDATION REQUIREMENTS**

Following a period of public consultation and mindful of the benefit to both applicants and the Council, the Development Management Panel has agreed that a 'CIL planning application additional information requirement form' be submitted as a validation requirement for certain categories of planning application with effect from 1st July 2014.

For expediency, the Planning Service Manager (Development Management) has been authorised to make any necessary changes to the 'local list of requirements' in the future in response to Government guidance and changes in local policy or circumstances.

#### **DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS**

The Development Management Panel determined eight applications at its March meeting and, of these, seven were approved and one refused. One of the applications supported involved a proposal for residential development of 41 dwellings on 1.03 hectares of land accessed from Dramsell Rise, off Cambridge Road, St. Neots. The site is located in the south-western corner of the wider Loves Farm Development. To make the development acceptable in planning terms, a Section 106 Agreement will provide a footbridge and adjacent works to a sum of £25,315, affordable housing at the target percentage appropriate at the time when

the Decision Notice is issued, a contribution per dwelling for wheeled bins and the distribution of a welcome pack with travel information.

#### **DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE**

The Development Management Panel has undertaken its regular review of the activities of the Development Management Services over the period 1st October to 31st December 2013. Applications and fees received have increased in comparison with the corresponding period in 2012 and despite staffing concerns the service has continued to determine 84% of major, minor and other applications within the prescribed targets.