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## **Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being)**

**Report of the meeting held on 4th September 2014**

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### **Matters for Information**

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#### **14. PROJECT MANAGEMENT UPDATE**

Pursuant to Item No. 12 of its Report to the meeting of the Council held on 30th July 2014, the Panel has received an update on progress made by the Council's Corporate Project and Programme Board in improving the project management arrangements within the Authority. The Board had been established in late 2013 and has achieved a number of successes, including the creation of a project management toolkit and the design and delivery of training in its use. Work will now be undertaken to consider the way in which programmes of work in the form of related projects can be better managed within the Authority and the training on the use of the toolkit will be extended to a second intake of Officers.

The Panel intends to make Project Management one of the key areas that it will review during this municipal year and has discussed a range of issues during its deliberations on this matter, including the Council's project management methodologies, the involvement of elected Members within the process and whether there would be any merit in comparing projects that are undertaken using the new approach with previous projects. The development and writing of specifications as part of the project management process might also be part of the investigations.

The Panel will revisit these discussions at its November meeting, prior to inviting the Corporate Team Manager to provide a further update in December 2014. The latter will include a demonstration of the project management toolkit, an overview of the programme of projects and the flow chart, which has been developed to explain the options available to manage projects. Following the receipt of this information, the Panel will trial the use of the Select Committee approach to challenge Cabinet Members on the Council's Project Management arrangements.

#### **15. FACING THE FUTURE – PROGRESS**

The Panel has received an update on the progress made to date with the delivery of the Facing the Future programme and the measures that have been put in place to continue delivering the proposals within

the programme. This forms the start of the Panel's work on Facing the Future during the current Municipal Year.

Members have been reminded that Facing the Future continues to be an important initiative as it is imperative that the Council delivers efficiencies across the Authority. It is envisaged that progress will begin to be made more rapidly now that the restructuring of the Council's Senior Management Team has been completed and Cabinet Members are currently reviewing all outstanding ideas and proposals within their portfolios. Programme management responsibilities will shortly be transferred to the newly established Corporate Team.

The Panel has noted that to support the delivery of the programme and improve staff skills in delivering change, a number of Officers have now received training on the 'Lean' improvement technique.

There are twenty five to thirty proposals relating to potential shared services. Updates specifically on Information Technology and Legal will be provided at the next meeting. To support their ability to monitor this programme, Members have requested access to the centrally maintained list of Facing the Future proposals, which includes dates for the evaluation of business cases for individual projects and project delivery. They have been assured that it will be possible to identify savings generated by the programme in the Medium Term Financial Strategy when it emerges in December 2014.

The Panel has discussed the additional information which may be required to challenge Cabinet Members when they receive the update in November and subsequently. This will include financial information, details of savings to-date, savings predicted and specific information relating to individual Cabinet Members' remits and outstanding proposals.

## **16. CORPORATE PLAN – PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

In conjunction with the Panels for Social and Environmental Well-Being, the Panel has been acquainted with progress on the key activities identified in the Corporate Plan during the period 1st April to 30th June 2014. Members have welcomed the receipt of performance information for the first quarter of the 2014/15 Municipal Year and noted that Executive Members will present reports and answer questions on performance within their areas of responsibility.

The Panel is generally content with the format of the report, subject to the inclusion of an action column for each of the key actions at a later date. Comment has been made that identifying the direction of travel in each area is as important as reporting on the current position.

In response to questions regarding specific actions within the strategic themes that have been allocated to the Economic Well-Being Panel, Members have been advised that the business case for previously identified energy reduction projects across the Council estate will be subject to the normal approval process and that the

outcome of the staff satisfaction survey will be presented to the Employment Panel in November 2014. The Panel has established that reported reductions in levels of Council Tax being collected elsewhere as a result of the welfare reforms trends appear not to have been replicated in Huntingdonshire. Local collection figures are buoyant and it appears that the Council has pitched Council Tax at an appropriate level.

**17. SALE OF LAND – ST MARY’S STREET, HUNTINGDON**

*(The following item was considered as a confidential item under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972).*

The Panel has supported a proposal to sell Council owned land at the front of the Pathfinder House site fronting St Mary’s Street, Huntingdon. In so doing, Members have taken into consideration other potential uses for the site.

Having noted that work is being undertaken to prepare a capital investment strategy, the Panel has expressed the view that the absence of the strategy should not hinder the Council from disposing of other small parcels of land in its ownership at the current time.

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**Other Matters of Interest**

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**18. NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS**

The Panel has received the current Notice of forthcoming Key Executive Decisions, which has been prepared by the Executive Leader. A request has been made that a copy of the Huntingdon West Masterplan is circulated to all Members of the Panel when it becomes available.

**19. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMIC WELL-BEING) – PROGRESS**

The Panel has reviewed its programme of studies. In so doing, Members have been informed that arrangements have been made for an Overview and Scrutiny Away Day on 13th October 2014 at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, which all Members are encouraged to attend. In addition briefings for all Members on Risk Management and Council Finance have been organised in advance of the Panel’s meetings in October and November 2014 respectively.

In terms of the Panel’s future work programme, post project information on the developments at Huntingdon multi-storey car park and One Leisure St Ives will be considered at a future meeting. A presentation will be received on the prosperity and vitality of the Market Towns in November. Following the Panel’s previous discussions on Risk Management, the Chairman has reached

agreement that the Corporate Governance Panel will refer any matters to the Panel where there is an opportunity for it to add value to on-going work on this subject.

**20. SCRUTINY**

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

R Harrison  
Chairman