

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SOCIAL WELL-BEING) held in Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 4 November 2014.

PRESENT: Councillor S J Criswell – Chairman.
Councillors R C Carter, M Francis, R Fuller,
Mrs P A Jordan, P Kadewere,
S M Van De Kerkhove, Mrs R E Mathews and
Mrs D C Reynolds.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors K M Baker, R S Farrer and A J Hardy.

50. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 7th October 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

51. MEMBERS INTERESTS

No interests were declared by the Members present.

52. NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Panel received and noted the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which had been prepared by the Executive Leader for the period 1st November 2014 to 30th April 2015.

It was noted that reports on the Council Tax Support Scheme and the Anti - Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 would be submitted to the meeting in December.

53. CORPORATE PLAN (PERFORMANCE REPORT)

(Executive Councillors D B Dew and D M Tysoe attended the Panel meeting for discussion on this item.)

By way of a report by the Policy and Performance Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel was updated on progress achieved against key activities identified in the Council's Corporate Plan over the period 1st July to 30th September 2014.

Proceeding to review the key actions under each strategic theme and in response to questions regarding the issue of fixed penalty notices

(FPNs) and fly tipping, Councillor Tysoe reported that eight FPNs has been issued by the District Council in the year to date by a small team of two who also were required to respond to other issues. For comparison, Fenland District Council maintained a team of five Officers for the purpose who had issued 14 FPNs over the same period. Councillor Tysoe confirmed that prosecutions for fly tipping had been undertaken and that he would advise Councillor Carter, after the meeting, should there be any cases currently under investigation.

In terms of litter around Tesco stores and fast food outlets (at Brampton Hut), Councillor Tysoe undertook to request the Head of Operations to pursue the issue with the organisations concerned. Having been advised of the opportunity to establish litter control zones under the Environmental Protection Act to prevent this nuisance and whilst accepting that these zones might require enforcement, Councillor Tysoe undertook to follow up the suggestion with the Head of Operations. It also was proposed that the Operations Division might engage local schools in litter prevention programmes.

Referring to diversionary activities for young people, the Managing Director accepted that the current measure was crude but that this was outweighed by the health benefit and diversionary activities provided to young people at minimal cost to the District Council.

In respect of partnership commitments, the Managing Director confirmed that an analysis of partnership arrangements was currently underway to establish those to whom further commitment would be made having regard to value for money and corporate priorities.

Regarding arrangements for temporary accommodation and in response to concern that accommodation should be maintained as temporary, the Managing Director assured the Panel that use of short term accommodation and bed and breakfast was resisted with greater reliance placed on Registered Social Landlords to locate suitable properties for those occupying temporary accommodation to move into. Whilst the Housing Team enjoyed a good working relationship with social landlords, the Managing Director acknowledged that turnaround times for lettings could be improved.

Councillor Dew confirmed that the District Council would seek, by design, to provide a mix of new properties to meet the needs of the elderly and disabled. He added that, subject to consideration of amended plans, the proposed extra care scheme at Langley Court, St Ives was on target for opening in late 2016.

In terms of the low take up of the grant funded 'Action on Energy', Councillor Tysoe acknowledged that strategic targeting using a variety of communication methods was required to ensure the target of 400 assessments would be met. As a first step to increase take up and to improve understanding, the Managing Director undertook to produce a briefing note for Members and Parish Councils on the 'Action on Energy' scheme.

With regard to refuse collection and whilst noting the performance indicators that had been selected, a Member suggested that the

District Council should be seeking to comply with best practice by minimalising waste and setting targets to reduce the amount of refuse collected going to landfill. The questioner also wished to review the performance of the street cleansing service to establish whether the service was better in towns compared to rural areas. Councillor Tysoe reported that he was aware of the cost of refuse collection per household and that this compared favourably with other Cambridgeshire authorities. He indicated his willingness to share this information with the questioner outside the meeting and to vary the performance indicator in future but advised the Panel that contamination was an issue which would require to be investigated before the Council committed to any alternative approach. Regarding street cleansing and the potential for service level agreements, Councillor Tysoe suggested that this would be a subject he would raise with his Cabinet colleagues.

Having regard to food establishments and the absence of any commentary, the Managing Director undertook to explain in the next quarter how food establishments were being measured and the parameters used to conclude that establishments were 'broadly compliant'.

Lastly, in terms of disabled facilities grant (DFGs) and having noticed that the annual target had reduced from 238 to 200, the Panel acknowledged that the target reflected the terms of the shared service agreement, and that whilst it would remain the aspiration of the Council to deliver DFGs, there was a limited budget with which to do so.

54. AFFORDABLE HOUSING WORKING GROUP

Referring to a report of the Affordable Housing Working Group (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), its Chairman, Councillor R Fuller expressed confidence in the ability of new local plan policies to deliver affordable housing and he also was satisfied that the policies would encourage innovative approaches to affordable housing by use, for instance, of exception sites and Community Land Trust models.

The Panel noted that the Working Group had requested further information on the Housing Waiting List to potentially reduce the size of the Register and seek to meet the expectations of those listed.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the proposed study programme and the Working Group's conclusions on relevant policies in the draft new Local Plan be endorsed.

55. ELDERLY PATIENT WORKING GROUP

The Chairman updated the Panel on matters raised at a meeting of the Elderly Patient Working Group which took place on 21st October 2014.

56. WORK PLAN

The Panel received and noted a report by the Scrutiny and Review Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which contained details of studies being undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels for Economic Well-Being and Environmental Well-Being.

In response to a question as to whether the update on the 'Facing the Future' programme could also be reported to the Social Panel, the Managing Director confirmed that the Cabinet was looking at how to manage the programme going forward and that she would raise the request with Executive Councillors to seek to make the monitoring/review process as inclusive as possible.

57. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SOCIAL WELL-BEING) - PROGRESS

Having regard to a report by the Scrutiny & Review Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel reviewed the progress of its activities since the last meeting.

In terms of the annual update to the Panel on the management of Hinchingbrooke Hospital and having acknowledged that Circle perhaps provided a more positive picture than might in practice be the case, Members questioned whether the Panel could begin to use select committee practices to undertake a more meaningful review of hospital operations. It was envisaged that this could involve inviting representations and evidence from former patients, employees and members of the public to enable the Panel to challenge Circle on issues raised more vigorously. Having accepted that this type of work could improve the role of the Panel, the Chairman agreed to liaise with Officers to produce a methodology for undertaking a more comprehensive review.

Councillor Carter, the Panel's appointed representative, reported on the outcome of a recent meeting of the Cambridgeshire Health Committee held on 16th October 2014. The main item discussed related to the draft revenue budget for 2015-20. It had been agreed that there would be no cash uplift of the public health budget in 2015/16 and that any savings achieved would be invested in preventative services reflecting Health Committee priorities. The Committee also received a scoping report on the public mental health strategy. The Scrutiny & Review Manager undertook to circulate a copy of the Minutes to the Panel by email.

58. SCRUTINY

The 149th edition of the Digest of Decisions was received and noted.

Regarding the agenda for the meeting and given that business appeared to be lighter than had hitherto been the case, the Managing Director reassured Members that the quality of the agenda was not a reflection on the staff that were currently available to support the

Panel and that going forward increased resources would be dedicated to the scrutiny function and senior managers and Member involvement in agenda planning would be essential.

Chairman