

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING) held in Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 11 November 2014.

PRESENT: Councillor G J Bull – Chairman.

Councillors J D Ablewhite, M G Baker,
Mrs B E Boddington, Mrs A D Curtis,
J W Davies, D A Giles, G J Harlock,
Ms L Kadic and R J West.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors I C Bates, B Hyland and M C Oliver.

IN ATTENDANCE: J D Ablewhite, D B Dew and D M Tysoe.

37. MINUTES

Subject to the inclusion of an apology on behalf of Councillor D A Giles, the Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 9th September 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

38. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were received.

39. NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Notice of Key Executive Decisions which was published on 17th October 2014, was received and noted.

40. CORPORATE PLAN - PERFORMANCE MONITORING (QUARTER 2)

(Councillors J D Ablewhite, Executive Leader, and D Dew, Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing, were in attendance for the discussion on this item).

Consideration was given to a report by the Policy and Performance Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on progress against the key actions and performance indicators contained in the Corporate Plan. The data covered the period 1st July to 30th September 2014 and included the position in the previous period for comparison.

The Executive Leader informed the Panel that the production of performance monitoring reports represented a significant step forward in the management of the Authority. He then confirmed, in response to a question by a Councillor, J W Davies, that Luminus had not requested a further amount in addition to the loan that had already

been agreed for development of a site in St. Ives.

Comment was made that there was a need to align more closely the reporting of performance with the remits of the Scrutiny Panels. In response to questions about roads associated with large strategic housing sites, it was confirmed that negotiation was taking place on new infrastructure in connection with potential development at Wyton and that conditions would be applied to the planning permission for proposed developments in St Neots that would limit development until improvements had been completed to the A428 and other roads.

Following questions about progress on the update to the Buildings at Risk Register and the processing of planning applications, the Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing reminded Members that the Planning Section had been operating significantly below establishment for some time. He went on to assure them that both areas of activity would be 'on-track' by the end of the year. In addition to having a full complement of staff, other measures to improve the processing of planning applications included reviewing the Scheme of Delegation and the way it was interpreted. The Executive Councillor expected next year's target for processing planning applications to correspond with national levels of performance.

With regard to the number of households living in temporary accommodation, Members were informed of a specific scheme to provide four additional dwellings intended for this type of tenure in Abbots Ripton Road, Huntingdon. More generally, analysis was being undertaken of demand and the location of temporary accommodation and, once this work had been completed, other schemes would come forward.

RESOLVED

that progress made against the key actions and performance indicators in the Corporate Plan be noted.

41. SHARED SERVICES - BUILDING CONTROL

(Councillors J D Ablewhite, Executive Leader, and D Dew, Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing, were in attendance for the discussion on this item).

By means of a report by the Head of Development (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel gave consideration to a proposal to form a shared Building Control service between Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire District Councils. Councillor D B Dew, Executive Councillor for Strategic Housing and Planning, confirmed that the option of adopting South Norfolk District Council's IT solution had been thoroughly investigated but was not currently being taken forward.

Members received assurances that service standards would be maintained and that the evidence that supported the business plan to generate an additional £60,000 per annum in income was robust. It was further clarified that the net benefit of the savings and additional income referred to in paragraph 4.1 of Appendix A would be shared

between the partners.

Having welcomed the opportunities the shared service could provide for employees in terms of career progression, the Panel recommended the Cabinet to approve the recommendations contained in this report. In addition, it was recommended that, to promote good governance, scrutiny arrangements were developed for the shared service.

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be recommended to approve the recommendations contained in the report by the Head of Development.

42. LITTER POLICIES AND PRACTICES

(Councillor D M Tysoe, Executive Councillor for Operations and Environment, was in attendance for the discussion on this item).

Pursuant to Minute Nos. 07/13 and 15/13, the Panel received and noted a report by the Operations Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the Council's litter policies and practices. Councillor D M Tysoe, Executive Councillor for Operations and Environment advised the Panel that in-depth figures for every area of work had not been included, but these could be provided if a detailed study was to be undertaken. He then drew Members' attention to various aspects of the service including the differing standards applied in towns, compared with rural areas for litter removal and the financial pressures on the service.

The Panel discussed the likely impact of potential areas for savings and, in particular, their implications for the resilience of the service. It was suggested that the Panel should examine these under the options for savings taking into account residents' appetite for change and make recommendations for future service scope and standards. On that subject, comment was made that the Council should encourage greater involvement of parishes in collecting litter. Furthermore, it was explained that the Council retained a statutory responsibility for standards of cleanliness and that current standards could be lowered without minimum standards being reached.

Following a question by Councillor D A Giles on waste collection from flats, it was agreed that Council representatives on the Board of a local Registered Provider should be asked to use their influence to encourage the organisation to make the necessary structural changes to such buildings. Councillor Giles also made a suggestion for responding to reports of graffiti. While there was agreement that there should be a single point of contact, it was decided that more work was needed on the details of how the Council's responsibilities were met.

In response to questions by Councillor G J Harlock on weed spraying and street sweeping, the Panel was informed that the Council had a standards based contract with the County Council for this work, but there was some disagreement on how the standards were interpreted. There was a need for clarification and agreement to be

reached between the two parties on the terms of the contract. Following discussion on enforcement of fly-tipping, it was

RESOLVED

that Councillors M G Baker, G J Bull, D A Giles and R J West be appointed to a Working Group to consider and make recommendations on future litter and graffiti service scope and standards and on public appetite for changes.

43. 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 Social Well-Being and Economic Well-Being.

44. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING) - PROGRESS

In receiving and noting a report by the Scrutiny and Review Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the Panel's ongoing studies, clarification of the status of the Tree Strategy was requested. It was reported that survey findings would be made available to the Waste Collection Working Group in February.

In order to provide Member input into a planned water and flooding Supplementary Planning Document for Cambridgeshire, a meeting of the Flood Prevention Working Group shortly would be held.

On the proposed study into the Licensing Service, it was reported that the Cabinet had held informal discussions on the Council's general enforcement role. It was agreed that the Panel would monitor developments and undertake a study if the circumstances merited it.

45. SCRUTINY

The Panel received and noted the latest edition of the Decision Digest (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). Councillor Mrs B E Boddington made a comment that the item on the Development Management Panel should distinguished between decisions, which were in accordance with Officers' recommendations and those that were not.

Chairman