
Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being)

Report of the meeting held on 11th November 2014

Matters for Information

21. CORPORATE PLAN - PERFORMANCE MONITORING (QUARTER 2)

In conjunction with the Panels for Social and Economic Well-Being, the Panel has reviewed data on the Council's progress against the key actions and performance indicators contained in the Corporate Plan. The data covers the period 1st July to 30th September 2014 and includes the position in the previous period for comparison. The production of performance monitoring reports represents a significant step forward in the management of the Authority. It has been suggested that there is a need to align more closely the reporting of performance with the remits of the Scrutiny Panels.

During the deliberations, it has been established that Luminus has not requested a further amount in addition to the loan that has already been agreed for development of a site in St. Ives. It has also been confirmed that negotiation is taking place on new infrastructure in connection with potential development at Wyton and that conditions will be applied to the planning permission for proposed developments in St Neots that will limit development until improvements have been completed to the A428 and other roads.

The Panel has examined progress of the update to the Buildings at Risk Register and the processing of planning applications. The Planning Section had been operating significantly below establishment for some time but the Executive Councillor for Planning and Housing Strategy has assured Members that both areas of activity will 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 include reviewing the Scheme of Delegation and the way it is interpreted. The Executive Councillor expects 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 have been informed of a specific scheme to provide four additional dwellings intended for this type of tenure in Abbots Ripton Road, Huntingdon. More generally, analysis is being undertaken of demand and the location of temporary accommodation

and, once this work has been completed, other schemes will come forward.

22. SHARED SERVICES - BUILDING CONTROL

The Panel has been acquainted with a proposal to form a shared Building Control service between Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire District Councils. The associated option of adopting South Norfolk District Council's IT solution has been thoroughly investigated but is not currently being taken forward.

Members have received assurances that service standards will be maintained and that the evidence that supports the business plan to generate an additional £60,000 per annum in income is robust. It has been further clarified that the net benefit of the savings and additional income will be shared between the partners.

Having welcomed the opportunities the shared service could provide for employees in terms of career progression, the Panel has recommended the Cabinet to make the necessary authorisations to allow the shared service to proceed. In addition, it has been recommended that, to promote good governance, scrutiny arrangements should be developed for the shared service.

23. LITTER POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Pursuant to Item No. 11 of the Report to the meeting of the Council held on 30th July 2014, the Panel has received information on the Council's litter policies and practices. In-depth figures for every area of work have not yet been compiled. These will be requested as required for any detailed study work to be undertaken. Members' attention has been drawn to various issues relating to the service including the differing standards applied in towns compared with rural areas for litter removal and the financial pressures on it.

The Panel has discussed the likely impact of potential areas for savings and, in particular, their implications for the resilience of the service. The Panel will examine the options for savings taking into account residents' appetite for change and make recommendations for future service scope and standards. It is generally agreed that the Council should encourage greater involvement of parishes in collecting litter. However, the Council will retain the statutory responsibility for standards of cleanliness. It should be noted that current standards could be lowered without minimum standards being breached.

Following discussion on waste collection from flats, it has been 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 to make collections possible. On the question of responding to reports of graffiti, there is agreement that there should be a single point of contact, but more work is needed on the details of how the Council's responsibilities are met.

In response to questions on weed spraying and street sweeping, the Panel has been informed that there is a standards based contract for the District Council to carry out this work on behalf of the County Council, but there is some disagreement on how the standards are interpreted. There is a need for clarification and agreement to be reached between the two parties on the terms of the contract. The Panel has also discussed enforcement of fly-tipping.

At the conclusion of the deliberations on this subject, Councillors M G Baker, G J Bull, D A Giles and R J West have been appointed to a Working Group to consider and make recommendations on the future scope and standards of the litter and graffiti services and on public appetite for changes.

Other Matters of Interest

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

The Panel has reviewed its programme of studies. In doing so, clarification has been requested of the status of the Tree Strategy. It has also been noted that survey findings will 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 will be held.

On the proposed study into the Licensing Service, as the Cabinet has held informal discussions on the Council's general enforcement role, the Panel will monitor developments and undertake a study if the circumstances merit it.

25. WORK PLAN STUDIES

The Panel has received details of the studies being undertaken by the other Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

26. NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Panel has been acquainted with the contents of the Notice of Key Executive Decisions and has confirmed the matters on which it wishes to be consulted before they are submitted to the Cabinet for determination.

27. SCRUTINY

The Panel has considered the latest edition of the Decision Digest and discussed matters contained therein. Comment has been made that it would be useful if a distinction is made between decisions

made by the Development Management Panel, which are in accordance with Officers' recommendations and those that are not.

G J Bull
Chairman