
Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being)

Report of the meeting held on 9th December 2014

Matters for Information

28. ENERGY MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Panel has received an update on the energy and cost savings which have been achieved through the Council's Carbon Management Plan since its adoption in 2009.

Over the lifespan of the Plan which has encouraged a rigorous approach to energy management by the Council, Members have been informed that the Authority has reduced its carbon emissions by 17.4% and its overall energy consumption by 10% (an average of 2% per annum). This is set against the normal expectations of a 3% rise per annum. Whilst the Authority has not achieved the original targets (a 30% reduction over a 5 year period), the Panel has been advised that the target set had not been achieved by any of the 50 local authorities who had sought to achieve it.

The Panel has noted that whilst a number of significant projects have been implemented there is considerable scope to build upon the success to date and introduce a framework that will deliver further energy and cost reductions. With this in mind, Members have been advised of plans to enter into a partnership with the County Council, Greater London Authority and Local Partnerships to access the RE:FIT procurement framework to assist with the identification and implementation of further energy saving measures. This will enable the Council to commission free desk top energy assessments of its nine main sites and to explore commissioning Investment Grade Proposals, where a business case for energy reduction is identified by the desk top assessment.

In considering the proposal, Members have been advised of the objectives of the initiative and that the RE:FIT framework forms part of the Mobilising Local Energy Investment (MLEI) initiative. The Panel also has also discussed the costs associated with the RE:FIT programme and has noted there would be a charge in the region of £1,000 - £4,000 for the preparation of a full Investment Grade Proposal. These costs would be recovered by the partner provider from the savings achieved by the Council in the first year. If the Council wishes to progress further an upfront capital investment will be required.

In response to a question from a Member, the Environment Team Leader has been asked to circulate an update on the Green Deal Home Improvement Fund which had been re-launched this week. Members have also been advised that the £7.8m funding which had been secured from the 'Green Deal Communities Fund' for solid wall installation in Cambridgeshire does not have to be spent until 30th September 2015 which would give the Council more time to actively promote the scheme to residents and secure sign-up.

Having endorsed the proposals within the report, the Panel has requested that further updates on progress with the identification and procurement of future projects through the RE:FIT procurement framework should be presented to future meetings of the Panel in due course.

29. HUNTINGDONSHIRE DESIGN GUIDE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

The Panel has received a preview of the new Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document. This sets out a number of design principles, based on recognised best practice, and outlines the key requirements that the Council will take into consideration when assessing planning proposals. The need to update the Council's existing Design Guide had been identified following a previous review by the Panel of the design principles for future developments. The new Design Guide will directly comply with National Planning Policy Guidance and align with the other documents currently being established by the District Council's Planning Team (i.e. the Council's Tree Strategy).

Having been informed that it is intended that the new Design Guide will be viewed primarily online, the Panel has congratulated Officers on the presentation of the document and welcomed the use of 'Plain English' within it. However, Members have expressed disappointment that some of the examples of good practice provided had been taken from outside of the District. The Panel has also emphasised the need to be consistent when referencing examples of good and bad practice throughout the Guide.

In terms of the content of the Guide, Panel Members have discussed the continuing impact of on-street parking and the lack of private parking on the overall visual amenity of new developments. Whilst it was acknowledged that this required to be overcome, Members have welcomed the inclusion of a minimum size for garages within the Guide.

The Panel has discussed the need to ensure that the statements made with regard to on-street parking within the new Design Guide are supported by the County Council as the Highways Authority. Members have been advised that the County Council will be a consultee to the document and as such it will be possible to make these points to them directly. It is hoped that the new guide will influence the County Council to impose requirements which are

consistent with the new SPD and thus improve the design quality of new developments.

The Panel has been advised that a six week public consultation on the Huntingdonshire Design Guide will take place between the 9th January and 20th February 2015. Having discussed the expectations of this exercise, Members have emphasised the need to promote the consultation and the need for feedback to members of the public. The Panel will also have a further opportunity to make comments on the Design Guide during this time.

Finally, and having regard to the timetable for the adoption of the Guide as an SPD in March 2015, the Panel has emphasised the importance of achieving a robust and sound document notwithstanding the timescale for its approval.

30. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMIC WELL-BEING) - PROJECT MANAGEMENT SELECT COMMITTEE

At the request of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being), the Panel has appointed Councillors G J Harlock, B Hyland and R J West to the Select Committee on Project Management.

Other Matters of Interest

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

The Panel has reviewed its programme of studies. In doing so, it has been reported that a meeting of the Tree Strategy Working Group will be held in January to enable Members to review the final content of the Strategy prior to its launch. It has also been noted that survey work to inform the review of waste collection policies will be undertaken in the New Year.

Having noted that the compilation of the planned water and flooding Supplementary Planning Document for Cambridgeshire was taking longer than anticipated, the Panel has noted that a meeting of the Flood Prevention Working Group will be convened once a finalised draft has been completed. The first meeting of the working group which had been arranged to consider future litter and graffiti service scope and standards will also be convened in the New Year.

32. WORK PLAN STUDIES

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

33. NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Panel has been acquainted with the content of the Notice of Key Executive Decisions.

34. SCRUTINY

The Panel has considered the latest edition of the Decision Digest and discussed matters contained therein. Members have requested an update on the current position with the injunction order which has been secured under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to prevent any further works to the Manor Farmhouse, 15 High Street, Spaldwick. The building is on the Council's Buildings at Risk Register.

G J Bull
Chairman