

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, 9 December 2014.

PRESENT: Councillor G J Bull – Chairman.

Councillors M G Baker, I C Bates,
Mrs B E Boddington, J W Davies, D A Giles,
G J Harlock, B Hyland, Ms L Kadic and
R J West.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs A D Curtis and M C Oliver.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor D M Tysoe.

46. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 11th November 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

47. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were received.

48. NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Notice of Key Executive Decisions which was published on 12th November 2014 was received and noted. Members were advised that the reports entitled 'Huntingdonshire Infrastructure Business Plan' and 'Local Plan to 2036 – Proposed Submission' had been delayed to June 2015.

The Chairman also reported that responsibility for car parking had recently been transferred to Councillor R B Howe, Executive Councillor for Commercial Activities.

49. ENERGY MANAGEMENT PLAN

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

With the assistance of a report by the Environment Team Leader (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Panel has received an update of the energy and cost savings which have been achieved through the Council's Carbon Management Plan since its adoption in 2009.

Following a brief introduction by the Executive Councillor, the Panel

were informed that the Carbon Management Plan had encouraged a rigorous approach to energy management by the Council which had resulted in the implementation of a number of initiatives, saving the Council an estimated £55,000 per annum. Members were advised that over the lifespan of Plan, the Authority had reduced its carbon emissions by 17.4% and its overall energy consumption by 10% (an average of 2% per annum). This was set against the normal expectations of a 3% rise per annum. It was also reported that the Council's Corporate Plan for 2014 to 2016 had set a target for a year on year reduction of 2% and consideration now needed to be given to the best means of achieving this.

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 would enable the Council to commission free desk top energy assessments of the nine main sites and to explore commissioning Investment Grade Proposals, where a business case for energy reduction is identified by the assessment.

In considering the contents of the report and the reductions which the Council had made in its carbon emissions during the last 5 years, Members have asked about the original targets which were set in the Carbon Management Plan. The Panel were informed that although the Authority had not achieved the original targets (a 30% reduction over a 5 year period), this was extremely challenging target and had not been achieved by any of the 50 local authorities who had been asked to achieve it.

With regard to the proposal to access the RE:FIT procurement framework, Members have been advised that the framework forms part of the Mobilising Local Energy Investment (MLEI) initiative and of the objectives of this wider initiative. Clarification was also provided as to the financial mechanism that would be set up as part of the MLEI project to enable the alignment of private sector and public sector investment into low carbon energy infrastructure.

The Panel has 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 wished to progress further an upfront capital investment would be required.

In response to a question from a Member, the Environment Team Leader was asked to circulate an update on the Green Deal Home Improvement Fund which had been re-launched this week. Members were also advised that the £7.8m funding which had been secured from the 'Green Deal Communities Fund' for solid wall installation in Cambridgeshire did not now 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.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the recommendations within the report now submitted be endorsed; and
- (b) that further updates on progress made with the identification and procurement of future projects through the RE:FIT procurement framework be presented to future meetings of the Panel in due course.

At the conclusion of this item, the Executive Councillor for Operations and Environment took the opportunity to explain that he would be giving an update on his vision for the future direction of the Green Spaces service in the context of the zero based budgeting exercise, the facing the future programme and future Government financial settlements at the forthcoming Council meeting.

50. HUNTINGDONSHIRE DESIGN GUIDE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

The Panel received a presentation from the Planning Policy Manager and the Urban Design, Trees and Landscape Team Leader which provided Members with a preview of the new Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

By way of introduction, the Panel were reminded that the need to update the existing Guide had been identified following a review by the Panel of the design principles for future developments. Members were informed that the new Design Guide SPD would be viewed primarily online and provide a useful tool for Members in the planning process. A six week public consultation on the Huntingdonshire Design Guide would take place between 9th and 20th February 2015 and the Panel would have a further opportunity to make comments at this time.

Having congratulated Officers on the presentation of the document and welcomed the use of 'Plain English' within it, Panel Members were then given the opportunity to ask questions on the contents of the presentation. In response to which, Members were advised that the new Design Guide would directly comply with National Planning Policy Guidance and align with the other documents currently being produced by the District Council's Planning Team (i.e. the Council's Tree Strategy).

In terms of the contents of the Design Guide itself, Members expressed disappointment that some of the examples of good practice provided had been taken from outside of the District and emphasised the need to be consistent when referencing examples of good and bad practice throughout the Guide. The Panel also discussed the need to ensure that the statements made with regard to on-street parking within the Guide were supported by the County Council as the Highways Authority. Having been advised that the County Council would be a consultee to the document, Members were informed that it would be possible to make these points to them directly. It was hoped that the new guide would help to influence the County Council to impose requirements which were consistent with the new SPD and thus improve the design quality of new

developments.

The Panel also discussed the continuing impact of on-street parking and the lack of private parking on the overall visual amenity of new developments. It was acknowledged that this remained a difficulty which needed to be overcome. A Member welcomed the inclusion of a minimum size for garages within the Guide.

With regard to the forthcoming public consultation and in response to a question by a Member, the Panel discussed the expectations of this exercise and emphasised the need to promote the consultation and the need for feedback to members of the public. Members were advised that the use of a website based tool provided a number of opportunities to engage feedback from the public.

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

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

RESOLVED

that Councillors G J Harlock, B Hyland and R J West be appointed to the Select Committee established by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) to carry out investigations into project management.

52. WORK PLAN

The Panel received and noted a report (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.

53. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING) - PROGRESS

With the assistance of a report by the Democratic Services Team (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel reviewed the progress of its activities since the last meeting.

With regard to the Panel's working groups, it was reported that a meeting of the Tree Strategy Working Group would be held on 14th January 2014 and that the survey work to inform the review of waste collection policies would commence in the new year. A meeting of the Flood Prevention Working Group would be convened once the draft water and flooding Supplementary Planning Document for Cambridgeshire was available.

On the proposed study of Litter policies and practices, Councillor D A Giles enquired whether it would be possible to arrange a meeting of this working group early in January 2015. Members were informed that Councillor R C Carter had also expressed an interest in joining

this group.

In terms of the Licensing Service, it was reported that the Cabinet had held informal discussions on the Council's general enforcement with the Corporate Management Team. The Chairman undertook to raise the matter with the Corporate Director (Delivery).

54. SCRUTINY

The Panel received and noted the latest edition of the Decision Digest (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). In so doing, Members requested an update on the current position with regard to 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.

Chairman