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## **Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being)**

**Report of the meetings held on 5th March and  
9th April 2015.**

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### **Matters for Information**

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**40. REQUEST FOR DELEGATED AUTHORITY TO PROCURE A NEW SOFTWARE SYSTEM FOR THE HOME-LINK SCHEME AND HOUSING ADVICE AND OPTIONS SERVICE**

The Panel has recommended the Cabinet to authorise Officers to proceed with the procurement of a new software system for the Home-Link scheme and Housing Advice and Options service. Members have noted that there is no option but to procure a new system. They have been acquainted with the revenue and capital costs associated with the new system. Having expressed support for the proposals, the Panel has decided to carry out further work on the associated costs and savings.

**41. PATHFINDER HOUSE - USE OF SPACE AND LETTINGS**

*(The following item was considered as a confidential item under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972).*

Having been informed of the responsibilities of each party for maintenance and for infrastructure and furniture, the provisions for adjusting the terms of the agreements and access and security matters, the Panel has made a number of recommendations to the Cabinet in relation to Pathfinder House use of space and lettings

**42. EXECUTIVE PORTFOLIO FOR ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT**

Pursuant to Item No. 36 of their Report to the meeting of the Council held on 25th February 2015, the Panel has discussed with Councillor S Cawley, Executive Councillor for Organisational Change and Development, his plans for his portfolio.

Councillor Cawley has informed the Panel that the Leader of the Council is of the view that the organisation need to improve its robustness and employees' morale and that employees are key to the delivery of services. The introduction of the new portfolio demonstrates the Cabinet's commitment to these issues. Councillor Cawley's role will be to:

- Give strategic support to the Corporate Management Team;
- Embed the Workforce Development Strategy into the organisation;
- Introduce a new appraisal process;
- Promote talent management and succession planning;
- Oversee the Council's relationship with LGSS;
- Support the Staff Council;
- Improve the staff survey and make use of its results, and
- Ensure the "people agenda" is considered in every debate that takes place.

The Panel have discussed the effect of the new portfolio on existing Executive Councillors' responsibilities for staff matters and on the Employment Panel. Members also have considered LGSS, the staff survey, the First Contact counselling service, the role of the union and the use of 360° appraisals. Councillor Cawley has invited Members to establish a dialogue on staff matters.

The Chairman has offered the Panel's assistance with the Executive Councillor's work.

#### **43. PREPARING TOWN CENTRES AND HIGH STREETS FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

The Panel has received a presentation from Mr W Grimsey on the subject of "Preparing Town Centres and High Streets for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century".

With less need for retailers in town centres, Mr Grimsey has suggested that towns should consider other ways of attracting people in. This could be through offering a 'unique selling point' such as history or heritage or through developing the towns as a 'community hub', with more residential property and health and education services provided in the centre.

The Panel has questioned Mr Grimsey specifically in relation to Huntingdonshire and has encouraged members to give thought to their own area and consider having their own plans to provide an incentive that would bring people in.

In thanking Mr Grimsey for his presentation, the Panel has agreed that his contact details would be made available to Members of the Panel.

#### **44. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2015/16**

The Panel has recommended the Cabinet to approve the proposed 2015/16 Capital Programme (Item no. 46 of their Report refers). All capital projects are now assessed under the new Capital Programme scoring mechanism and are reviewed by the Finance Governance Board.

Members have expressed interest in seeing more detail on the proposed capital scoring system which the Finance Governance Board has used to assess the proposals and details of which will be provided via email. The Head of Resources confirmed that this scoring system was based on methodology provided from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA).

In discussing the impact of capital spending decisions on towns and parishes, members have been informed that moves to standardise play equipment purchased will not reduce the amount of equipment provided for our communities. In connection to wireless CCTV, the Panel has noted that this was not recommended for approval due to insufficient savings. However, ongoing work to reduce costs of the service through commercialisation is in progress.

#### **45. PROJECT MANAGEMENT SELECT COMMITTEE**

In conjunction with the Cabinet (Item no. 48 of their Report refers), the Panel has considered the outcome of the Project Management Select Committee. The Select Committee was held in February 2015 and has looked back at past projects, including the Huntingdon Multi-Storey Car Park and the redevelopment of One Leisure St. Ives. They have also received a demonstration of the Council's project management tools and three workshop sessions each focused on different project phases. Members have also been given a range of information on how projects will now be managed and access to details of current and past projects.

In noting the actions and conclusions from the Select Committee the Panel has recommended approval of the recommendations, which has included making arrangements for a briefing session with the Programme and Projects Manager and committing to further reviews of project processes in six and twelve months' time.

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### **Other Matters of Interest**

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#### **46. NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS**

The Panel has received current Notices of forthcoming Key Executive Decisions, which have been prepared by the Executive Leader.

#### **47. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMIC WELL-BEING) – PROGRESS**

The Panel has reviewed its programme of studies at each of its meetings. Members have discussed the forthcoming Investment Strategy and it has been suggested that the Panel should have an input into the Strategy at an early stage. A workshop has been held for this purpose. To start their discussions off, the Panel has asked for brief statements from Councillor J A Gray on what he is

considering and from the Head of Resources on treasury management.

The Panel has expressed their gratitude to Councillor P G Mitchell for his work on the Great Fen Project and other work during his time as a District Councillor, the Panel has wished him well on his retirement. The Panel has agreed that the Great Fen Project will now be managed by the Overview and Scrutiny Environmental Well-Being Panel.

Following the receipt of a report from Councillor Hayward on behalf of the Budget Working Group, the Panel has agreed that this item will be removed from the Work Plan however a similar approach may be followed in future years.

The Panel has requested that reports on Facing the Future and Zero Based Budgeting be submitted to a meeting of the Panel in June 2015.

#### **48. WORK PLAN STUDIES**

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

The Panel has received a request for a volunteer to be co-opted on to the Affordable Housing Working group led by the Social Well-Being Panel. Councillor P L E Bucknell has been appointed to this group.

#### **49. SCRUTINY**

The Panel has received the latest editions of the Decision Digest.

R Harrison  
Chairman