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## **Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being)**

**Report of the meeting held on 10th November 2015.**

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### **Matters for Information**

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#### **21. WASTE POLICY DEVELOPMENTS AND HUNTINGDON NEEDS ANALYSIS OF OPEN SPACES AND PLAY FUNCTIONS**

The Interim Head of Operations has updated the Panel on the Waste Policy Developments and Huntingdon Needs Analysis of Open Spaces and Play Functions.

As part of the Waste Policy Developments the service was required to develop a new lane end collection policy and a new dry recyclates contamination policy. The new lane end collection policy required the individual survey of 87 tracks, lanes and unadopted roads in the District.

The Panel has been informed that there has been difficulty in collecting from unadopted roads. Options offered to the resident include a request for them to move the bin to the end of the unadopted road on collection day or ask the resident to sign a warranty in order the refuse collection crews to enter the unadopted road and collect from the property. Members have been advised that the warranty ensures that the Council would not be liable for any damage caused by the refuse lorries.

The new policy for dry recyclates has evolved as a result of high dissatisfaction with the number of bins rejected. If refuse collection crews find small items they remove them and bag them up, explaining to the resident that the particular item cannot be recycled. However if there is more contamination, a photograph will be taken and transferred to the Call Centre so if the customer contacts the Call Centre Staff would be able to explain why the bin was not collected.

Members have been advised that now the Huntingdon Needs Analysis has been completed the Department will work on completing an open spaces needs analysis of Sawtry, Godmanchester and St Neots by the end of March 2016.

With regards to the needs analysis, Officers have been identifying current and future provision in the towns and parishes. In regards to Huntingdon there has been some concern over allotment provision. However with regards to the play area provision the analysis identified that four play areas require upgrading from a Locally Equipped Area

for Play (LEAP) to a Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP) with funding to do so available through existing Section 106 (S106) funding. The areas are highlighted as follows:

- The Pits, Sapley Road Play Area;
- Sallowbush Road;
- Stukeley Meadows Primary School; and
- Elsie's Way.

In relation to a question regarding the identification of the 87 lanes and other locations, Members were informed that the lanes had been identified by the refuse collectors, local knowledge and customer feedback. Officers have stated that they believed not all the lanes have been identified, however would be liaising with residents in order to establish the location of other lanes.

In response to a query from a Member regarding the possibility of losing S106 funding, Officers have confirmed that the risk existed however a Red, Amber and Green (RAG) status has been established to assist with minimising the risk.

In response to a query regarding the cost to Town and Parish Councils of ongoing maintenance, Members have been advised that the Council needs to have the dialogue with the Town and Parish Councils. The ongoing maintenance costs are covered by the Town and Parish Councils, however if the cost is too great then decommissioning becomes an option.

Members have been advised that in response to a shortage of allotments, that a different range of options have been considered, including identifying areas for allotments outside of Huntingdon and releasing land for community gardens however further consultation needs to be undertaken.

Members have explained that one of the problems with recycling contamination was education, as some residents still believed that textiles could be recycled. In response, the Panel has been informed that there would be an awareness campaign to inform residents of the specific items that could be recycled.

## **22. LOCAL PLAN TO 2036 - UPDATE**

The Panel has been informed of an update to the Local Plan to 2036. Members has been advised that progress on the Local Plan has slowed, due in part to the need for strategic transport modelling, which was needed in particular to assess the transport effects of the proposed housing allocation at Wyton Airfield.

The Panel's attention has been drawn to the Government's requirement that Local Plans need "to be written" by early 2017 and the consequence of not achieving this will be that the Government will intervene to arrange for the Local Plan to be written for Huntingdonshire. The Government has yet to clarify the meaning of "to be written", however to ensure that the Government does not take over

the writing of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan, these statements should be interpreted as a requirement to submit the proposed Local Plan to the Government by March 2017.

Members have been informed that the Council will be exploring the identification of a supply of sites for years 1-10, alongside continuing to develop the current approach to the Local Plan which has identified a supply for years 1-15. If the traffic impacts of development at Wyton Airfield have not been resolved using the transport modelling in time to submit the Local Plan by the early 2017 deadline, the Council will consider whether to submit a Plan. The Plan will include the 10 year supply of sites and exclude specifically the allocation of Wyton Airfield. This approach will require a commitment to an early review of the Plan.

The Panel have been advised that Local Plans are required to demonstrate that sufficient infrastructure will be provided to meet the needs of planned development. This is different to earlier planning rules where it is assumed that such infrastructure will be provided when development takes place. Members have been pleased to note the inclusion of infrastructure planning within the Local Plan.

The Panel has highlighted their concerns with how the Government will progress with Local Plans. Members have been advised that the Government has been attempting to improve the economy through development and see Local Plans as a mechanism to achieve this. However there appears to be little understanding within the Government on why developments take time to progress, for reasons such as resident opposition and developers not building on land that has permission for development.

In response to a question regarding Neighbourhood Plans, the Panel has been advised that Neighbourhood Plans have been considered as supplementary planning documents, once 'made' Neighbourhood Plans will become part of the adopted Development Plan. The Panel has expressed their agreement with having a twin tracked approach-exploring the 10 year Local Plan option, although have indicated a preference for a 15 year Local Plan.

## **23. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS**

The Panel has been informed about the establishment of a process for progressing Neighbourhood Plans from examination to Referendum following the receipt of an Examiner's report into the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Panel has requested that the options available to planning authority following the examination is fully explained to Town and Parish Councils as they need to know under what limited circumstances the Cabinet can hold up or reject a Neighbourhood Plan. In addition Members have indicated that clear timescales need to be set out for Town and Parish Councils, particularly in relation to when the Neighbourhood Plan is passed to the Council for the Examination and Referendum.

In response to a question regarding Town and Parish Council who have decided not to create a Neighbourhood Plan, the Panel has been advised that having a Neighbourhood Plan increases the amount of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) the Town or Parish Council will receive on a development from 15% to 25%. However it has been noted that a Town or Parish Council can decide to produce a Neighbourhood Plan at a later date if they wish.

The Panel have emphasised to the Cabinet the requirement for a Town or Parish Council to adopt a project plan when developing a Neighbourhood Plan. In addition Members have been reminded that it is the responsibility of the Town or Parish Council to produce a clean copy once the Cabinet have considered the content.

#### **24. ST NEOTS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

The St Neots Neighbourhood Plan has been presented to the Panel. Members have been informed that after the Examination in February 2015 the Neighbourhood Plan can proceed to a Referendum subject to the modifications being made as recommended by the Examiner.

Following a discussion regarding community involvement, Members have highlighted their concerns that the Neighbourhood Plan may be rejected if there is a low turnout at a Referendum. In response, the Panel has been assured that a majority vote of electors will allow the Neighbourhood Plan to be adopted regardless of turnout.

In response to a concern that St Neots has been losing out on Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding, the Panel has been reassured that to date St Neots has not missed out on CIL funding, which is due after the final planning conditions have been discharged. In addition, the Panel has been reminded that Neighbourhood Plans are intended primarily as a way for communities to develop a shared vision for how they want their area to developed and that CIL funding can be seen as a secondary bonus.

Members have questioned the timings of the progression of the Neighbourhood Plan to Referendum, as it was submitted in April 2014 and is only being submitted to the Cabinet in November 2015. The Panel have been advised that in hindsight the process could have been quicker. The process has been a learning experience for the Council, since the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan is the first Plan in Huntingdonshire to be progressed this far in the process. The Panel has also been informed that the Council is not in control of all the timescales: specifically, the Neighbourhood Plan has to undergo a statutory six week consultation after submission before the Neighbourhood Plan can be submitted to an Independent Examiner.

The Panel has asked for further clarity on the timescales involved between submission, examination and Referendum of Neighbourhood Plans. In response it has been clarified that the process as referred to in Item No.23 will give a clear indication of timelines and that the Huntingdonshire Community Planning Support report, to be considered by the Panel in December 2015, will clearly set out the process.

Following concerns the Panel has been reminded that the Neighbourhood Plans process should not be concerned with completion before the Local Plan is adopted. Neighbourhood Plans should be consistent with, and complement, both the adopted and emerging Local Plans, giving the Town or Parish some control of local planning issues such as the amount and location of development.

The Panel has recommended to the Cabinet that the timescales for the process of creating a Neighbourhood Plan should be made clearer. In addition once the Cabinet has considered the Neighbourhood Plan and has agreed to proceed to a Referendum it should be made clear that it is the responsibility of the Town or Parish Council to produce a 'clean copy' of the document.

## **25. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL STRUCTURE**

In conjunction with the other two Overview and Scrutiny Panels, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel Structure report has been presented to the Panel. Members have been advised that at the Scrutiny Away Day in February 2015, the structure of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Panels have been reviewed and alternative arrangements have been explored. The Panel has endorsed Option 2 which includes the following:

- Rename the 'Social Well-being' Panel to 'Communities and Customers';
- Rename the 'Economic Well-being' Panel to 'Finance and Performance'; and
- Rename the 'Environmental Well-being' Panel to 'Economy and Growth'.

The Panel has been informed that the preferred option is considered to have the clearest links to the Corporate Plan's strategic priorities and objectives. It is also expected that the preferred option will result in a more balanced workload for the Panels, with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman meeting regularly to review the Agenda Plan.

Members have been advised that in addition to the changes to the Panels, two Task and Finish Groups will be established. The first will investigate the impact of County Council Budget Cuts upon services in Huntingdonshire. The second Group will investigate Registered Social Providers and the challenges faced by them in the future.

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### **Other Matters of Interest**

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

The Panel has been acquainted with the contents of the Notices of Key Executive Decisions which has been prepared by the Executive Leader.

**27. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING) – PROGRESS**

The Panel has reviewed its programme of studies. Members have been informed that the Huntingdonshire Infrastructure Business Plan will be presented to the Panel at their meeting in December 2015.

The Panel has indicated that they would like to investigate the cost of open spaces maintenance. In regards to litter polices Councillor D A Giles has informed the Panel that he has a meeting with the Environmental Education and Promotions Officer in order to progress the matter.

Members have been advised that the Decision Digest will no longer be included with the Agenda but will be circulated electronically. The Panel will continue to consider the Decision Digest at future meetings under the Agenda Item 'Overview and Scrutiny Progress'.

**28. WORKPLAN STUDIES**

The Panel has received details of the studies being undertaken by the other Overview and Scrutiny Panels. The Panel has appointed Councillors Mrs S J Conboy, D A Giles, T D Sanderson and R J West to the Impact of the County Council Budget Cuts Task and Finish Group

T D Sanderson  
Chairman