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# **Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economy and Growth)**

**Report of the meetings held on 12th January and 9th February 2016.**

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## **Matters for Information**

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### **1. OVERVIEW OF INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARDS**

The Panel has received a presentation from the Project and Assets Manager on Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs). The key points are as follows:

- an IDB is a local public authority that manages water levels and are usually found within areas of special drainage need;
- there are 120 IDBs in England, of which 15 are located within the District;
- the Council pay IDBs around £394k in drainage rates each year;
- the IDB Board consists of elected Members from the ratepayers and Council nominations. They tend to be volunteers so costs are kept to a minimum; and
- the advantage of IDBs are that they are managed by local people who know the area, the problems and want the best solutions.

Following a question regarding dredging and when it is carried out, the Panel has been advised that dredging is the responsibility of each individual IDB and, as they are proactive, dredging would be carried out when it is essential.

The Panel has received clarity on the issue of flooding. IDBs want to restrict flooding on farm land to a minimum, however rivers, such as the Ouse, have large flood plains which are designed to flood when they burst their banks.

In response to the presentation, the Panel has discussed the merits of the Flood Prevention Working Group after which it has been decided that the Group will be disbanded with the Panel scrutinising flooding documents when it is deemed necessary.

## **2. PROGRESS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MARKETING STRATEGY (SIX MONTHLY REPORT)**

The Panel has received progress on the implementation of the Marketing Strategy. In addition to the report, Members have received a brief history of the Marketing Strategy.

Members have been informed that the success of the implementation plan would be measured against three key outputs, which are:

- successful launch of website and initial promotional materials;
- increasing volumes of website traffic; and
- increasing numbers of newsletter subscriptions.

A concern has been raised by a Member that contrary to encouraging workers into the area the District is becoming a commuter area. In response Members have been advised that recruiters have stated that they have vacancies which they are struggling to fill. In addition the Council are working with partners EDGE in order to try and convince commuters to remain in the area and take advantage of the employment opportunities.

In response to a question about apprenticeships and how the Council are promoting them, the Panel has been informed that there has been a careers fair in December 2015 with 88 exhibitors. Furthermore there are business breakfasts where the Council promotes apprenticeships.

Arising from a question regarding where the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) fit into the establishment, Members have been advised that the LEP is a business led organisation for a large area. The Government requires local authorities to consult with the LEP on economic development projects.

## **3. OPEN SPACES WATER SAFETY POLICY**

The report on Open Spaces Water Safety Policy has been endorsed by the Panel. Members have been advised that as part of the Policy all open water sites will be risk assessed according to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) guidance. It has been recommended that RoSPA should train staff within the Environmental Services Section to carry out risk assessments as this was seen as a more sustainable approach to managing the risk of open water sites.

The Panel has noted that it is proposed the Council proactively manage the risk of open water sites by using RoSPA's publication 'Safety in Inland Water Sites' as design guidance so that developers will consider the risks of open water sites when designing and constructing developments.

In response to a question regarding reassessing the risk, the Panel has noted that the Council will assess high risk open water sites each year and low risk open water sites every three years. Members have been advised that legislation places the emphasis on local authorities

to assess the risk of open water sites and how often those areas should be reassessed.

Concerns have been raised with regard to open water sites within the District where there are not safety measures and it is not clear who is responsible for the maintenance. Members have noted that the Policy lists the locations of Council owned outdoor open water sites and that £30k will be allocated to provide equipment and signage as necessary from the site specific risk assessments.

The Panel have expressed support for the Policy as it shows the Council are taking water safety seriously and have indicated that they would like to review the Policy at a meeting of the Panel in 12 months' time.

#### **4. STREET CLEANSING – SERVICE SPECIFICATION**

The Panel has endorsed the Street Cleansing Service Specification. Members have been advised that the specification has been developed to be compliant with the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

The Panel has noted that in order to assist the prioritisation of street cleansing, the District has been zoned from one to four and the response times vary according to the zone. If there is a fall in standard from grade A to grade B within zone 1 then the Council will rectify the standard within five hours however if the standard drops from grade A to grade D then the Council will rectify the standard within one hour. Members have been advised that maps will be produced in order to clarify the zones and in particular the Town Centre areas.

Following a request that the Council should remove all graffiti and not just offensive graffiti, Members have been advised that the specification makes reference to offensive graffiti as there is a legislative requirement to remove offensive graffiti. The Panel has recognised that although ideally all graffiti should be removed there are different scales of graffiti and it is important that, with the limited resources available, the Council prioritises its response.

After a discussion concerning the enforcement of dog fouling and littering, Members have discussed the possibility of forming a Working Group to investigate developing an awareness campaign or targeted enforcement work such as littering from cars.

The Panel has expressed their support for the specification and have requested regular updates at future meetings of the Panel.

#### **5. EARITH, SAWTRY AND STILTON NEEDS ANALYSIS OF OPEN SPACE AND PLAY FACILITIES**

The Panel has received the Earith, Sawtry and Stilton Needs Analysis of Open Space and Play Functions. The Panel has been advised that Earith has limited green space provision and, as such, it is recommended that any future housing development of over 10 houses should include open space provision on site, or a contribution to open

space provision off site. Play provision is deemed to be adequate for Earith.

Members have noted that the Sawtry Needs Analysis has been carried out upon request of a Member. Sawtry has sufficient green space provision and is well distributed throughout the village. The Panel has been advised that open space provision for Sawtry does not need prioritising at the current time. However, against the policy benchmark for provision there is a deficiency in play provision across parts of Sawtry but by upgrading St Judith Field will create an adequate level of play provision.

The Panel has been informed that the Stilton Needs Analysis has been carried out as a Member has requested whether the Council could provide some open space for parking provision. Green space provision in Stilton is limited and it has been recommended that any future housing development of over 10 houses should include open space provision on site or make a contribution to open space off site. The village has some play provision and it has been further recommended that any future housing development should include appropriate play facilities.

## **6. UPDATE ON GREEN SPACE PROVISION**

The Panel has received an update on Green Space Provision. Members have been informed that the Council has the Supplementary Planning Document 'Huntingdonshire Local Development Framework Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document 2011' which governs Open Space Policy.

The Panel has been informed that the Policy states that new open space and/or facilities on-site must be offered to local Town and Parish Councils for adoption in the first instance and then to the District Council. Should the District Council not be a position to adopt such provision then developers must submit a proposal detailing how a Trust will manage the open spaces.

Members have been advised that in respect of Section 106 (S106) money the Council needs to be proactive and set out its priorities. The needs analysis work for future open space and play facilities across the District has highlighted the current deficiencies, therefore the Council are now able to identify the priorities.

The Panel has agreed with Town and Parish Councils taking responsibility for the open spaces. In addition, Members have highlighted the importance for the Council to be proactive and set its priorities in order to make Huntingdonshire a place where residents want to live.

Following a question on how a Trust works, the Panel has been informed that Trusts encourage communities to become more involved with their open spaces and facilities as residents are required to contribute to the management and maintenance of open spaces and facilities.

A concern has been raised in connection with the maintenance costs differing dependent upon the size and shape of open spaces. Whereby, Members have been informed that the Council would work with developers to ensure that size and shape of open spaces are to a standard which does not adversely affect the maintenance cost of the open space.

## **7. EVENTS POLICY FOR PARKS AND OPEN SPACES**

The Panel has received the Events Policy for Parks and Open Spaces. Members have been informed that the Policy sets out a framework for the consideration, programming and operation for a variety of events in parks and open space.

The Policy highlights the five types of events that could be staged in the Council's parks and open spaces, which are:

- events by registered charities;
- events organised by voluntary groups or organisations;
- commercial events;
- events and activities that enhance the environment; and
- civic events.

Furthermore the Policy has a proposed schedule of charges, however discretion has been given to the Executive Councillor for Operations and the Environment to ensure that Charities, Voluntary Groups, Town and Parish Council are not disadvantaged by the Policy.

In response to a concern regarding prohibited groups, the Panel has been advised that it is not possible to have a complete exhaustive list of prohibited groups and that the Policy outlines the criteria for prohibited events to which an event could be measured against.

Members have indicated they would like to see two sets of commercial fees to distinguish between local businesses and larger nationwide businesses. In addition the Panel have requested a distinction to be made between national and local charities, as a local charity does not have the resources available similar to a national charity.

## **8. ANNUAL MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR COUNTRYSIDE ASSETS**

The Panel has received the Annual Management Plans for Countryside Assets. The report assesses the amenity and wildlife value of all the Countryside Service's assets as well as what Department or Agency is best placed to manage those assets.

Members have expressed support for the report as it clearly zones the areas and identifies the Department responsible for the maintenance of the assets. The Panel has requested that in future could site plans be included within future updates of the report.

The Panel has requested to receive an update on the Management Plans in June 2016 with the inclusion of site plans and the assets ranked in the order of amenity and wildlife value.

## **9. GROUNDS MAINTENANCE – SERVICE SPECIFICATION**

The Panel has received the Grounds Maintenance Service Specification. The Service Specification has consolidated the existing Service Strategy with the aim of better directing the Grounds Maintenance activities delivered by the Operations Service.

Arising from a question regarding the maintenance of open space at Loves Farm, St Neots, the Panel has been advised that the land is owned by Cambridgeshire County Council and that their own service specification for Grounds Maintenance differ to the Council's.

Members have been informed that the Grounds Maintenance Service will be audited to ensure that maintenance frequencies are correct with those incorrect frequencies amended accordingly.

The Panel has been advised that there will be regular feedback on Grounds Maintenance with further reports at meetings of the Panel each quarter.

## **10. REVIEW OF WASTE POLICIES**

The Panel has received the Review of Waste Policies which considers the following policies: lane end collection arrangements; rejections policy in respect of repeated contamination of bins; options for reducing the bin capacity on domestic collection (grey bins) to reduce the waste produced by households; and options for charging for replacement bins that have been damaged, lost or stolen.

Members have been informed that despite the awareness campaign the Council are still receiving contaminated waste. Where it is possible to identify the resident responsible the Council will visit the resident to re-educate and ensure contamination does not occur in the future. As a last resort consideration would be given to removing the bin from the resident.

In respect of damaged, lost or stolen bins, the Panel has been informed that bins that have been damaged by the refuse collection crews will be replaced free of charge. As the bins have a life expectancy of 10 years, so long as the resident has not had a replacement bin within that period then the resident would not be charged for the replacement.

In terms of the three options for reducing the bin capacity, the Panel has been informed that all three options would go out to consultation. Members have expressed that the preferred option is to issue 140 litre bins to all new properties unless they have been built to accommodate six or more residents but providing an additional 240 litre blue bin for

recyclates on request; and providing 140 litre bins to any property requesting a replacement bin.

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### **Other Matters of Interest**

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#### **11. 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.

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

The Panel has reviewed its programme of studies. Members have been informed that a Working Group on Public Open Spaces is being considered and that a scoping paper will be presented to a future meeting of the Panel.

#### **13. WORKPLAN STUDIES**

The Panel has received details of the studies being undertaken by the other Overview and Scrutiny Panels. At the meeting of the Panel in January, Members have been advised that a date for the Impact of Cambridgeshire County Council Budget Proposals on Huntingdonshire and the residents Task and Finish Group will be set in the near future and that Members of the Group will be informed in due course.

T D Sanderson  
Chairman