

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMY AND GROWTH) held in Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 9th February 2016.

PRESENT: Councillor T D Sanderson – Chairman.

Councillors Mrs B E Boddington, J W Davies, Mrs A Dickinson, I D Gardener, S Greenall, P Kadewere and R J West.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors I C Bates, B S Chapman, D A Giles and K D Wainwright.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors J D Ablewhite, R C Carter, D B Dew, R Fuller and Mrs L Kadić.

13. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 12th January 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

14. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interests were received.

15. NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Panel received and noted the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which has been prepared by the Executive Leader for the period 1st February 2016 to 31st May 2016.

16. UPDATE ON GREEN SPACE PROVISION

The Panel received an update on Green Space Provision. Members were 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 it is necessary for the Council 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 and therefore the Council are now able to identify the priorities.

The Panel agreed that Town and Parish Councils should take 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 was 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.

In response to a question regarding resident contributions Members were advised that there would be a covenant placed upon the property which would require the resident to contribute towards the maintenance costs of open spaces.

After a query on Town and Parish Council's understanding and implementation of Section 106 (S106) Members were advised that the Council provides an ongoing programme of training for Town and Parish Councils in which a session could be focused on S106.

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.

The Panel have indicated that they would like to receive an update on S106 money as well as a demonstration of how the Council's Huntingdonshire Local Development Framework Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document 2011 relates to a development such as Wintringham Park, St Neots.

(At 7.05pm, during the discussion on this item, Councillor D B Dew entered the meeting).

17. EVENTS POLICY FOR PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

With the aid of a report by the Interim Head of Operations (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Events Policy for Parks and Open Spaces was presented to the Panel. Members were informed that the Policy sets out a framework for the consideration, programming and operation for a variety of events in Council-owned 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.

Members were reminded that currently the Council only has one charge which is £243 per day for fun fayres. The Panel were informed that when the fayres arrive on site early and are not operational the showmen do not want to pay the charge for the non-operational days.

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.

Following a suggestion from a Member that the Council could only charge the fayre half the amount for each day the site was occupied but the fayre was not operational, the Panel was advised that the Council needs to have a clear charge and it was hoped that with the policy the Council is able to have a meaningful conversation with the Showman's Guild.

After a question in regards to events taking place upon the highway Members were informed that there is an Events Advisory Safety Group. Attendance at the group is not mandatory however event organisers are encouraged to attend so that they could receive feedback from the Police.

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.

Concerns were raised that Town and Parish Council events would be treated as commercial events despite the possibility that such events could lose money. In response the Panel was reminded that Town and Parish Councils have the ability to raise a precept to fund events. If the event is raising money for a charity then the Executive Councillor would discuss the matter with the Town/Parish Council.

The Panel wanted to place on record that they would like: more clarity to be given on Town and Parish Councils holding events; the policy to distinguish between large commercial organisations and local businesses and the policy to be well advertised.

18. ANNUAL MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR COUNTRYSIDE ASSETS

With the aid of a report by the Interim Head of Operations (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Annual Management Plans for Countryside Assets was received by the Panel. 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.

It was emphasised to the Panel that during the preparation work for the Management Plans it became clear that the Countryside Service was working on areas that were not necessary. Members were informed that the Service is in good order but requires streamlining.

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.

19. GROUNDS MAINTENANCE - SERVICE SPECIFICATION

With the aid of a report by the Interim Head of Operations (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Grounds Maintenance Service Specification was presented to the Panel. 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 they have 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 were informed that during auditing the performance standard would also be assessed.

Following a question regarding the inclusion of Ramsey Cemetery on the proposed work plans the Panel was informed that the Council has a contract with Ramsey Town Council for grounds maintenance work at Ramsey Cemetery.

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

20. REVIEW OF WASTE POLICIES

With the aid of a report by the Interim Head of Operations (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) Review of Waste Policies was presented to the Panel. The review 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.

Following a question from the Panel in regards to the wording of the bin capacity options Members were informed that if a resident would like a smaller bin all they would be required to do is request one.

(At 8.22pm, during the discussion of this item, Councillors R Fuller and Ms L Kadić left the meeting).

21. WORKPLAN STUDIES

The Panel received and noted a report by the Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which contained details of studies being undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels for Communities and Customers and Finance and Performance.

Members noted that the Chairman would meet with the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Communities and Customers) to discuss which Panel the Registered Social Providers Study should sit with.

(At 8.45pm, during the discussion on this item, Councillors J D Ablewhite, D B Dew and R C Carter left the meeting).

22. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROGRESS

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

Chairman