

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, 8th March 2016.

PRESENT: Councillor T D Sanderson – Chairman.

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

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors R C Carter and D B Dew.

23. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 9th February 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

24. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were received.

25. 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 March 2016 to 30th June 2016.

26. CORPORATE PLAN

With the aid of a report by the Corporate Team Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Corporate Plan was presented to the Panel. Members were informed that the Corporate Plan is updated every two years. The Plan is strongly linked with the Service Plans and it aims to give Overview and Scrutiny the ability to hold Portfolio Holders to account.

Whilst giving feedback upon the Corporate Plan a Member emphasised that it is important to include open spaces within the Plan as it reinforces the Council's commitment to open spaces as there had been issues in the past.

The point of 'reduce incidences of littering' underneath the Enabling Communities Section had been noted as being difficult to measure by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Finance and Performance) however the Panel thought the action was important and it should be kept in. In response Members were informed that the issue was whether the action showed a reduction of litter or just a reduction of

complaints.

Following a Member's insistence of including an action of reducing fly posting and graffiti, the Panel were advised that one of the measures included is the National Indicator 195 which measures the reduction of fly posting and graffiti as well as litter.

Members would like the point of 'prevent homelessness where possible by helping households either remain in their current home or find alternative housing' within the Enabling Communities Section to include within a reasonable distance from key services as the Panel had concluded that the current location for temporary accommodation for homeless people is too far away from any amenities.

In response to a question relating to graffiti and how the Council are working with the Police. The Panel were informed that the Council would remove offensive graffiti within 24 hours and non-offensive graffiti within 48 hours. The Council are committed to working with Cambridgeshire Constabulary in bringing about prosecutions for graffiti.

The Panel was informed that the action concerning business rates supporting local businesses underneath the Sustainable Growth Section was not finalised when the report was written. Members thought that using business rates to support local businesses was what the Council should be doing to unlock growth however were not sure on whether this should be supporting new businesses in the area or the growth of existing local businesses.

The Panel thought that accelerate business growth and investment underneath the Sustainable Growth Section was crucial for the Council and should remain in the Corporate Plan.

Members questioned the influence the Council has in regards to the Local Enterprise Partnership however the Panel were informed that the influence comes as a result of the inclusion of the Executive Leader on the LEP board.

A question was raised in regards to the action of 'HDC to develop our own apprenticeship scheme' underneath the Sustainable Growth Section and why the Council are not developing an apprenticeship scheme with the regional college. In response Members were informed that it is the aim of the Council to have a scheme run in-house.

In response to the suggestion of developing an action on assisting first time buyers who are priced out of the local property market due to property developers buying properties to rent out, the Panel was informed that the Housing Strategy would contain the details of the Council's objectives in respect to housing.

Following a question regarding the action point of 'introduce measures to reduce energy costs in One Leisure' underneath the Efficient and Effective Council Section, the Panel was informed that an analysis on energy saving had been carried out, the business case would be produced and the actions implemented.

Members emphasised that the action of 'affordability and value for money are at the core of the Council's decision making processes' underneath the Efficient and Effective Council Section is an important action to roll out to every employee within the Council.

The Panel were acquainted with the idea of amending the measure of 'number of missed bins per 100,000 households' within the Efficient and Effective Council section to a measure which resolved the issue of missed bins. Members were supportive of a more customer focused measure.

In regards to the measure of maximising recycling underneath the Efficient and Effective Council Section Members were informed that the measure would be amended to focus on reducing waste as was deemed a more meaningful target.

A Member has stated that they would like the measure of 'staff sickness days lost per full time employee (reduce to 9 days per person)' underneath the Efficient and Effective Council reduced further as they thought that this was too high. The Panel were informed that according to the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development (CIPD) the public sector average is 9 days and this was why the target was chosen.

Following the discussion the Panel was informed that the Council has a sickness rate of between 11 and 12 days however this is adversely affected by long term sickness absence. Members thought splitting the measure between long term and short term sickness would give a better reflection of sickness within the Council.

The Panel were advised of the option to include a measure of paying local suppliers within 10 working days however Members felt that as long as the Council has a reputation for paying invoices within 30 days and that suppliers are happy with the arrangement then there is little point or benefit of committing to pay invoices within 10 days.

A Member noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Communities and Customers) was informed that the A1 and A428 was not included within the action of 'continue to provide active input into the delivery stage of the A14 to deliver the specific requirements of the Council' underneath the Sustainable Growth Section because the schemes would not be at the delivery stage within the lifetime of the Corporate Plan. Despite this the Member would still like their inclusion as it would reinforce the Council's commitment to those schemes.

(At 7.02pm, during the discussion on this item, Councillor P Kadewere entered the meeting).

(At 7.34pm, during the discussion on this item, Councillor D B Dew left the meeting).

(At 7.35pm, during the discussion on this item, Councillor D B Dew returned to the meeting).

27. LOCAL PLAN TO 2036 PROGRESS REPORT

With the aid of a report by the Head of Development (a copy of which

is appended in the Minute Book) the Local Plan To 2036 Progress Report was presented to the Panel. Members had been informed that the Environment Agency's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment had progressed however the County Council's Strategic Transport Study had not progressed.

In regards to the Strategic Transport Study the Panel was informed that the Cambridge Sub-Regional Model (CSRM) traffic model was flawed and requires revalidation which won't be complete until the end of May and that in turn would put the submission of the Local Plan back to summer 2017.

Members noted that there will be an earmarked fund for the development of the Local Plan but were advised that the money is existing money.

Following a question on the County Council contribution towards the costs of developing the Local Plan Members were informed that the County Council would fund the work they would undertake but no additional funding would be offered.

When discussing the road infrastructure the Panel was informed that the Council would be looking beyond the A1 and A428. In regards to the A141 Members were advised that there is a requirement for the A141 to be upgraded regardless of whether Wyton gets developed or not.

Concerns were raised in relation to the human resources available to the department to carry out work on the Local Plan however the Panel were informed that there is a plan in place to acquire the resources needed.

Following a question on what is required by the Government by early 2017; Members were advised that the Council is still unsure what is meant by having a written Local Plan by early 2017.

Four potential development scenarios have been produced to be tested using the CSRM however the Panel will not make a preference until they have been tested.

The Panel are content with the overall progress on the Local Plan but were concerned that the CSRM was not correct. Members approved the earmarking of funds for the development of the Local Plan.

28. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

With the aid of a report by the Head of Development (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Local Development Scheme was presented to the Panel. Members were informed that the scheme was being developed for two reasons. The first was for legal compliance and the second was that the Council's report produced each December could be produced against an up to date Local Development Scheme.

Comments were raised in regards to the environmental assessment. Members were informed that the environmental assessment is completed early in the Neighbourhood Plan process and that the St

Neots Neighbourhood Plan had an environmental assessment.

The Panel recommended to Cabinet that the new Local Development Scheme (March 2016) be approved and commence on 24th March 2016.

29. GODMANCHESTER AND ST NEOTS NEEDS ANALYSIS OF OPEN SPACE AND PLAY FACILITIES

With the aid of a report by the Interim Head of Operations (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Godmanchester and St Neots Needs Analysis of Open Space and Play Facilities was received by the Panel. Members were informed that provision in both towns is sufficient with the exception of parks and allotments.

In regards to Godmanchester, the Panel were advised that provision is good and the Bearscroft Farm development will further enhance provision. With respect to the development of open space and play facilities Members were informed that the Council has a schedule of projects ready to be funded by new developments.

A Member has expressed concern that allotments could look unsightly and highlighted a specific allotment area in The Stukeleys that could be used as a model when such developments faced residential complaints about untidiness.

In relation to St Neots, the Panel were informed that there is a good level of provision with the exception of allotments and community gardens. Members were advised that there is a scheme to provide allotments within the green space between the A1 and the west of Eaton Socon. The Panel noted that Officers would explore the effective use of Council owned land for the needs that have been identified. Members thought the allotment scheme in St Neots would be a good use of land.

30. UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF OPEN SPACE AND PLAY FACILITIES FUNDED FROM SECTION 106 CONTRIBUTIONS

With the aid of a report by the Interim Head of Operations (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) an update on the Implementation of Open Space and Play Facilities Funded from Section 106 (S106) Contributions was presented to the Panel. The update explains how the S106 are being dealt with and the aim is to present regular updates to the Panel with the inclusion of the Community Infrastructure Levy.

In response to a question regarding St Neots S106 monies Members were informed that with the exception of the monies from Loves Farm the S106 money is ready to spend. The Town Council would need to contact the Council with proposed schemes so that the money could be released.

Following a question regarding the process Members were informed that the needs analysis identifies a need, the Town or Parish Council would speak to manufacturers, the Town or Parish Council would submit a proposal to the Council with complete costings and then the

Council would release the money for the scheme.

The Panel positively received the update and thought that the inclusion of the Community Infrastructure Levy would be useful. Members were informed that an electronic copy of the update would be circulated to all Members.

31. WORK PLAN 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 were informed that the Voluntary Sector Grant Funding Working Group would not be reviewing the Community Chest arrangements.

The Panel was informed that the Registered Social Providers Working Group would remain within the remit of the Communities and Customers Panel. Members were acquainted with the work of the Working Group including the study on 29th February 2016.

(At 8.39pm, during the discussion on this item, Councillors R C Carter and D B Dew left the meeting).

32. 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. Members were informed that the Corporate Enforcement Policy would be entered onto the Work Programme.

Chairman