

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT) held in Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 6th December 2016.

PRESENT: Councillor T D Alban – Chairman.

Councillors J W Davies, Mrs A Dickinson, Mrs A Donaldson, D A Giles, T Hayward, Mrs P A Jordan, P Kadewere, L R Swain and Mrs J Tavener.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors B S Chapman and D Harty.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors R Fuller and R B Howe.

54. MINUTES

The minutes for the meeting of the Panel held on 1st November 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

55. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were received.

(At 7.01pm, during the consideration of this item, Councillor Mrs A Donaldson entered the meeting.)

56. 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 December 2016 to 31st March 2017.

Following a question regarding the Review of the Council's Street Markets, Members were informed that the subject had been incorrectly allocated and that a report on the matter will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economy and Growth).

57. CAMBRIDGESHIRE HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2015/16 AND REVIEW OF DEMAND FOR DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS

With the aid of a report by the Housing Strategy Manager, the Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency Performance Review 2015/16 and the review of ongoing demand for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) in Huntingdonshire was presented to the Panel.

Members were informed that the review covers the financial year 2015/16 and has been brought to the Panel for this meeting to match

when previous year's reviews were brought forward to the Panel. It was explained that in previous years the report was provided so late following the end of the financial year as the Council were also reporting on other matters relevant such as the possible inclusion of additional Local Authorities within the shared service. However Officers don't foresee such problems in the future so it is the intention to report future end of year reviews in June.

In addition to the information received from the 2015/16 review, Members were informed that customer satisfaction levels have increased in Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 for 2016/17.

Officers informed Members that currently some funding is provided by Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), however the funding will reduce from 1st April 2017 and will cease from 1st April 2018.

In response to a question regarding the proposed reduction in funding, Members were informed that the Council has chosen to reduce its contribution towards DFGs. Additionally we do not know how much funding we will receive from the Better Care Fund. Members were concerned that a reduction in the funding would leave the scheme unable to cope with the aging population and the increase in the number of dwellings.

Following a question regarding the spending of DFGs, the Panel were informed that the monies for the DFGs are fully spent each year. There are performance indicators for the time taken to complete work however Members were informed that they were not being met as there have been delays.

It was explained that delays with the completion of DFGs have occurred as a result of a lack of Occupational Therapists to assess patients and a limited number of contractors that are unable to keep up with the amount of work they have to do.

Members were informed that there are now less delays with the Occupational Therapists, as the agency who supplies them have put in some extra resources to clear the backlog. The agency covers the whole Cambridgeshire area and has been able to reallocate Occupational Therapists to the District for the purpose of clearing the backlog. However Members were reminded that only a certain number of DFGs can be discharged in a single year as the budget won't allow for more to be discharged in a financial year.

Following a question in regards to staff issues experienced by the Home Improvement Agency (HIA), Members were informed that there has been a case of long term sickness and a member of staff has gone on maternity leave. Also the agency deals with the regular turnover of staff as well as issues training new staff members.

The Panel noted that the HIA cannot continue the way it has been. The population is aging and living longer meaning that more residents require DFGs, however that is difficult with some funding ceasing and other funding amounts uncertain. Members agreed that the HIA needs to review itself and look at making efficiency savings.

In response to a question on whether there are enough contractors available to carry out the work, the Panel was informed that the Adaptations Plus scheme will bring in more contractors which would have the effect of more competitive prices as they compete with each other for work.

A Member asked a question in relation to the fee the resident would have to pay and were informed that there are means testing and those who do not have to pay are currently fully funded by the DFG budget.

The Housing Strategy Manager explained to Members why the target for the time from referral to completion for works over £10k is 45 weeks. Members were informed that the Occupational Therapist refers the patient to the HIA who then allocates a case worker. The case worker then: assists with the application form, carries out the means testing and obtain quotes for the DFG. The application is submitted to the Council to determine if the work is needed and if it is then the contractor carries out the work. The case worker then inspects the work.

Members were reminded that delays can happen as, for example, the patient may require an extension which requires planning permission. In addition if the patient lives in a Luminus property then the HIA would have to get permission from Luminus to adapt the property.

The Housing Strategy Manager reminded Members that if a resident is having issues with the DFG and the work then each applicant is allocated a case worker which can be contacted if there are any problems.

Following concerns raised in regards to how Members could represent applicants on their behalf, the Housing Strategy Manager agreed to provide clarity on how Members can prove who they say they are when dealing with issues for residents.

In response to a question on whether the HIA prioritises patients Members were informed that it does prioritise patients particularly those who need their properties adapted before they can be discharged from hospital.

Following the question are we likely to see an improvement on the completion figures, the Panel was informed that Quarter 2 for 2016/17 shows a slight improvement. This is due to the extra resources for the Occupational Therapists and ensuring that contractors finish alteration work on time.

A Member suggested that the Fire Service are willing to diversify to complete small DFG jobs however Officers are unaware of this but have resolved to follow it up.

58. CAMBRIDGE GLIDING CLUB CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

The Panel noted the information provided by the Council's representative on the Cambridge Gliding Club Consultative Committee, Councillor R J West.

The Panel noted that the Civic Aviation Authority want a fee of £7500 to issue a permission to hold an air show, Members thought this was excessive. Members supported the Chairman in writing a letter expressing the Panel's support of the Cambridge Gliding Club Consultative Committee.

59. HOUSES OF MULTIPLE OCCUPATION

Councillor Mrs A Dickinson updated the Panel on the Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) Day of Action that she attended. The day of action took place on 17th November 2016. There were two different teams, of which Councillor Dickinson was in one team with two Council Officers and a PCSO, who went to the Oxmoor estate.

The Panel were informed that the occupants of the house do not have to let the team into the property however the occupants of the first property that the team visited were in and the team was invited in. The Panel was told that where the team has to walk away they will do but they will go back at a later date. The Council Officers within the team constantly look for signs of multiple occupancy.

The tenants that were spoken to by the team were open. On the whole Councillor Dickinson thought the Day of Action was worthwhile and that they are important in finding problems in certain areas.

Following a question regarding the background paper, Members were informed that the background paper is a context document which is designed to give the Panel examples of what is being looked for. Some of the practices that are found cannot be dealt with by the Council and would have to be referred to partner agencies.

Councillor Dickinson added that if there were any questions on the day then they could be answered by the team. The Day of Action is primarily a fact finding mission looking at the basics such as are people safe and well.

In response to a question regarding documentation, the Panel was informed that the question of documentation was one of the main questions the team asked on the Day of Action.

A Member asked about the practice of bed swapping, which is when occupants work alternate shifts and use the bed alternately. In response Members were informed that the team found no evidence of that on the day.

Following a question regarding working with neighbouring organisations, the Head of Community Services informed Members that work is coordinated with neighbouring authorities.

60. CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL HEALTH COMMITTEE UPDATE

Councillor A Dickinson updated the Panel on the meetings of the Cambridgeshire County Council Health Committee that took place in November. Members were reminded that the meetings in November were joint meetings with Peterborough City Council where the merger of the Hinchingbrooke Health Care NHS Trust with Peterborough and

Stamford Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust was discussed.

At the meetings the Joint Panel called the external auditors, KPMG, before them and scrutinised their documents. At the end of both meetings Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council both agreed in principle to the merger. The Trusts had their Board meetings in late November and the Full Business Case was ratified.

When asked how much influence she had, Councillor Dickinson informed the Panel that she was allowed to speak but had no voting rights. The Joint Panel focused on the wider picture however the lack of a Plan B was picked up by the Joint Panel's Members.

Following a question on the governance issue, the Panel was informed that a Joint Panel Member suggested that governors for Hinchingsbrooke and Stamford could vote together against Peterborough.

In response to a question on what influence the Council will have on Hinchingsbrooke following the merger, Members were told that the Council has influence by sending correspondence and through the Executive Councillor for Leisure and Health and the Head of Leisure and Health who work closely with health partners.

The Panel were informed that, following a question regarding any other issues raised at the meetings, the work of the Joint Panel focused on the merger of the Trusts.

The Chairman took the opportunity to inform Members that no formal response to the letter sent by the Panel has been received from Mr Burns, Chairman of the Hinchingsbrooke Health Care NHS Trust. In addition, the Panel was informed that Mr Burns is to leave his role at Hinchingsbrooke on 31st December 2016.

(At 8.03pm, during the consideration of this item, Councillor Mrs P A Jordan left the meeting and did not return.)

61. CCTV TASK AND FINISH GROUP - TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Chairman informed the Panel that discussion on the CCTV Task and Finish Scoping Document would be deferred until the New Year following a discussion with the Executive Councillor for Strategic Partnerships and Shared Services. In addition Councillors D A Giles and P Kadewere have expressed their interest in becoming more involved with the Task and Finish Group.

62. 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 Economy and Growth and Performance and Customers.

63. 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.

A Member was keen that a date is arranged for the Cambridgeshire County Council's Officer responsible for Public Rights of Way to attend a meeting of the Panel.

The Chairman informed Members that he had noted that the organisers of the antiques fayre at the Burgess Hall, St Ives had put out boards on Cambridgeshire County Council land. Whilst currently there is nothing the Council can do the Chairman would like to see within the Corporate Enforcement Policy a clause which states that if an organisation is hiring Council premises for an event then they are agreeing not to fly post. In addition the Panel noted that the Corporate Enforcement Policy will come before the Panel in April 2017.

Members noted that Councillor Mrs J Tavener will be the Panel's representative on the Huntingdonshire Community Safety Partnership.

Chairman