

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, 7th March 2017.

- PRESENT: Councillor T D Alban – Chairman.
- Councillors B S Chapman, S J Criswell, J W Davies, Mrs A Donaldson, D A Giles, T Hayward, P Kadewere, L R Swain and Mrs J Tavener.
- APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors D Harty and Mrs P A Jordan.
- IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Mrs A Dickinson, R Fuller, D Watt and R J West.

74. MINUTES

The Minutes for the meeting of the Panel held on 10th January 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

75. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor S Criswell declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to Minute Numbers 77 and 79 as a Cambridgeshire County Councillor.

Councillor B Chapman declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to Minute Numbers 77 and 79 as a Cambridgeshire County Councillor.

Councillor D A Giles declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to Minute Numbers 77 and 79 as a Cambridgeshire County Councillor.

Councillor T Hayward declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to Minute Number 77 as the Chairman of the Ouse Valley Way Group.

76. 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 2017 to 30th June 2017.

(At 7.03pm, during the consideration of this item, Councillor P Kadewere entered the meeting.)

77. PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

The Panel received a presentation from Cambridgeshire County Council's Highways Maintenance Manager, Mr Jonathan Clarke, on the maintenance of Public Rights of Way (PRoW). Mr Clarke

explained to the Panel that the County Council have three documents it refers to when managing PRow maintenance: The Highway Infrastructure and Asset Management Plan, Transport Delivery Plan and the Cambridgeshire Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

It was explained that the Highway Infrastructure and Asset Management Plan is a document that has a list of maintenance work for the County for the next three years.

Concern was raised that since the dedicated Officer for PRow in Huntingdonshire was lost the District's PRow are not maintained as well as they should be. In response Mr Clarke stated that the County Council work with a maintenance Plan which states how much the County Council are spending over the next five years on the maintenance of PRow and where it will be spent.

Following a question regarding working with communities Mr Clarke stated that it is something the County Council are willing to do. He added that his team of PRow Officers has reduced from nine full time officers to one full time and one part time officer which means that training for PRow coordinators will not be as frequent as in the past, however they are aware of the work that needs to be carried out. Mr Clarke clarified that Cambridgeshire County Council is responsible for the maintenance of 3000km of PRow.

After a discussion on what constitutes a PRow and the safety standard, Mr Clarke confirmed that there is guidance of what constitute a safe and unsafe PRow.

In response to a question regarding reporting defects on PRow and the highway in general, Mr Clarke stated that it would be best if all defects were reported via the online system where it will be logged and a reference number given.

A Member questioned whether it would be easier to have Parish PRow Wardens who could coordinate the maintenance. The Panel were informed that it could be easier and more effective however the coordination of volunteers will use resources that the County Council does not have.

78. URGENT ITEM - REGULATORY JUDGEMENT: LUMINUS GROUP LIMITED

The Chairman announced that he proposed to admit the urgent item in accordance with Section 100B (3) and (4) of the Local Government Act 1972. The Executive Councillor for Housing and Regulatory Services explained to Members that representatives from Luminus had been invited to attend the Panel meeting however they had declined.

He added that the Council had first heard of the Regulatory Judgement on Luminus via an article in Inside Housing and not from Luminus themselves. The two issues for concern were that more than 1000 properties had not had a valid gas safety certificate for two years (an issue which has been resolved) and the Governance arrangements.

In respect to the Governance of Luminus the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) has downgraded Luminus' rating. Members were reminded that the Council is not a regulator of registered providers however it is a partner.

The Corporate Director (Delivery) has been in contact with the HCA regarding this judgement. He informed Members that as a result of the regulatory judgement there are obligations on Luminus to work with HCA to undertake voluntary measures to improve the Governance. If this doesn't happen then there are further enforcement remedies available to the HCA.

The Panel discussed the Council's representation on Luminus' Trust Board. The Panel were informed that up to May 2016, the Council had a Member on the Board and four Members on the subsidiary board. Following guidance issued from the Government, Luminus looked to change the Board to a skills-based board. This has meant that the Members were not allowed to participate at Board meetings. Luminus and the Council have since agreed to reduce the Council's representation to one Member on the Board and one Member on the subsidiary Board.

Following a question the Panel were informed that the Executive Councillor is planning to meet with Luminus before a representative of Luminus attends the Panel meeting in April.

A Member expressed concern that Luminus has a £48m commercial investment which they may not have the ability to manage.

After the Panel were told that it up to the tenants to ensure that their properties are safe and have the correct certificates, a Member expressed concern that some tenants do not have the knowledge to know that they should do that.

In response to a question regarding the responsibility the Council has to inform tenants we introduce to registered providers to check the safety of the property, the Panel were told that there is no obligation on the Council however packs are given to tenants. In addition Officers have agreed that they will review the current measures before the Housing Strategy is presented in June 2017.

The Panel agreed that the Chairman and Chief Executive of Luminus should be invited to the next meeting of the Panel in April.

79. NEW CAMBRIDGESHIRE HOUSING ADAPTATIONS AGREEMENT AND REFRESHED HUNTINGDONSHIRE HOUSING RENEWAL ASSISTANCE POLICY

With the aid of a report by the Housing Strategy Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the New Cambridgeshire Housing Adaptations Agreement and Refreshed Huntingdonshire Housing Renewal Assistance Policy was presented to the Panel.

The Panel was informed that the Housing Adaptations Agreement is a County wide agreement which establishes a joint strategic approach to delivering housing adaptations to ensure the best use of capital resources available through the Better Care Fund. The Council have

also taken the opportunity to update the Huntingdonshire Housing Renewal Assistance Policy.

The report was welcomed by Members of the Panel.

In response to a question on how flexible is the Council in regards to the referral process, Members were informed that the Council remain flexible as referrals can come into the District Council and specifically to the Grants Officer.

A Member was concerned that the national shortage of Occupational Therapists would affect Occupational Therapy treatment in the District however Members were informed that the Occupational Therapy service had caught up with referrals in Cambridgeshire earlier this year and they prioritise their care where it is needed most.

Following a question in regards to the carrying out of works and in particular does the Council have a group of local firms or is every job out for tender every time, the Panel were informed that the Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency (CHIA) have the remit for the tendering of work. The CHIA is in the process of establishing a contractors framework and the Housing Strategy Manager agreed to obtain an update on this which is to be circulated to Members.

Members were informed that the only changes with the Housing Renewals Assistance Policy are listed in Appendix 6 of the Policy.

A Member highlighted that the amendment to the Housing Renewal Assistance Policy concerning boiler replacements could be confusing and appear contradictory to residents. It was explained that the amendment confirmed the closure of the Boiler Replacement Scheme, which hasn't been used by the Council for a while, however kept the ability for residents to apply for boiler replacements through the Discretionary Minor Repairs Assistance scheme.

The Panel supports the changes and has asked Cabinet to endorse the Cambridgeshire Housing Adaptations Agreement and approve the refreshed Housing Renewal Assistance Policy.

80. WASTE ROUND RECONFIGURATION UPDATE

Members received a verbal update on the implementation of the Waste Round Reconfiguration project from the Head of Operations. The Panel were informed that, the day of the meeting, was day seven of implementation and that as the service works on a ten working day rota, the learning from day one would not occur until the Monday following the meeting.

As a result of the reconfiguration the service is expected to make £187k of savings over the next three years. The service have removed a collection vehicle from the waste and garden collections however the same could not be done for the recycling round due to the Council's successful recycling policies encouraging residents to recycle more.

The Panel was informed that the service has missed 94 bins during collections. The context is that the service collects 19k bins daily so

the missed collections represents around 0.5%. This was deemed as good by the Head of Operations during a time of transition.

Following a question, the Panel were informed that normally collection officers start their shift at 6.30am and finish at 2.30pm. However due to a few issues some collections are finishing at 5.30pm. Although on balance the workload amongst the collection crews is fairer.

The Panel were informed that the service has received 56 queries from residents who were confused about the reconfiguration and the website has been received 1000 hits per day as residents have been checking when their bin gets collected (normally it the figure is 20 per day).

In response to a concern the Head of Operations stated that the service won't collect from schools at start or finishing times due to health and safety concerns of parents, children and the waste collection officers and it delays encountered by the collection officers collecting bins at those times.

Members thought that the reconfiguration has been implemented well and congratulated the service on the entire process.

81. REPRESENTATION ON EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS - QUARTERLY UPDATE REPORT

With the aid of a report by the Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Representation on External Organisations – Quarterly Update Report was presented to the Panel.

Following a question of how useful does the Panel find the report and how often do Members want to receive it, a Member stated that they thought the report should be presented annually with the caveat that Members should update Overview and Scrutiny of any important business as and when it occurs.

The Panel would also like to know how many meetings takes place for each organisation.

In addition, Members thought there should be regular updates on Cambridgeshire County Council Health Committee from the Panel's representative.

The Panel agreed that reports should be produced annually with the emphasis on Members to feedback any significant business to the relevant Panel.

(At 8.35pm, during the consideration of this item, Councillors Mrs A Dickinson and R Fuller left the meeting and did not return.)

82. 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.

83. 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.

The Panel was informed that the CCTV Task and Finish Group is in progress with the next meeting taking place on 16th March 2017.

A Member asked if there could be an agenda item on home welfare visits, although the Panel have not decided what outcome they would like from the item or who to invite.

The Panel have requested that wherever possible could the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels be kept the same, however it was recognised that the decision would be taken at Annual Council.

Chairman