

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT) held in Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, Brampton Road, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE29 6DB on Tuesday, 5th September 2017.

PRESENT: Councillor T D Alban – Chairman.

Councillors P L E Bucknell, B S Chapman, S J Criswell, J W Davies, 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 Mrs A Donaldson, D A Giles and D Watt.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Mrs A Dickinson, R Fuller and T Hayward.

25. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 4th July 2017 and 13th July 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

26. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor S Criswell declared a non-statutory disclosable interest in respect to Minute Number 32 due to his role as a Cambridgeshire County Councillor.

Councillor T D Alban declared a non-statutory disclosable interest in respect to Minute Number 31 as his employer does business with North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust.

27. 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 September 2017 to 31st December 2017.

28. HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK

Mr David Thorogood, Chairman of the Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park (FHCP) was in attendance. Mr Thorogood explained that the FHCP has a membership of 150 and that the primary aim of FHCP is to assist in the maintenance of the Park. Other aims include promoting access to the Park and applying for funds to finance the maintenance works. Mr Thorogood added that the FHCP applies to a number of organisations for funds.

The FHCP have donated funds for a variety of projects around the park including the erection of the shelters and a fence around the play

area.

In response to the question, what maintenance priorities the FHCP have, Mr Thorogood stated that the FHCP have completed most of them however they continue to maintain the park and the next priority would be maintenance of the paths.

Following a question regarding the number of complaints received, the Panel was informed that the FHCP redirect any complaints received to the Senior Ranger at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park.

29. TREE STRATEGY

Councillor T Hayward introduced the item and explained the concerns of Members in regards to the Tree Strategy. The Panel was informed that a group of Members had previously reviewed the Tree Strategy for Huntingdonshire. A concern was raised that, although the Strategy is a very good document and was adopted, there is not the adequate staff or resources to carry out the aims of the Strategy or the associated Action Plan. In particular, Members were concerned that the Council is to lose the role of the Tree Warden Co-ordinator, whom Members believe is crucial to the co-ordination of the Tree Warden Scheme as well as the fulfilment of the actions in the Action Plan and the aims of the Tree Strategy.

Before the Executive Councillor for Housing and Planning responded, the Panel stated that they would like the Tree Strategy reaffirmed. In addition, if the Tree Warden Co-ordinator post is abolished, the Panel would hope that one of the main aims of the new post to support the Landscape Officer is to focus on coordinating the Tree Warden Scheme.

The Executive Councillor for Housing and Planning informed the Panel that the Council had agreed to removal of the Tree Warden Co-ordinator post. It was confirmed that the Council still has the expertise to monitor the Tree Warden Scheme. The Executive Councillor suggested that the Panel carries out a piece of work to analyse the Action Plan.

In addition, Members were informed that there are 29 actions in the Action Plan and that the Tree Warden Co-ordinator leads on 2 actions.

Members expressed their wish that the Tree Strategy should continue to promote the planting of trees, that the Parish Tree Wardens know which Officer to contact when they require assistance from the Council and that the strategy is re-affirmed/re-adopted.

The Panel,

RESOLVED

- 1) to establish a Task and Finish Group to refresh the Tree Strategy and scrutinise the Action Plan.
- 2) to co-opt a Parish Council representative on to the Task and Finish Group.

- 3) to co-opt a Town Council representative with an expertise in trees on to the Task and Finish Group.

30. CAMBRIDGESHIRE HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

With the aid of a report by the Housing Strategy Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency (CHIA) Annual Performance Report was presented to the Panel.

In introducing the report the Executive Councillor for Housing and Planning informed Members that CHIA was a shared service managed by Cambridge City Council. Recently CHIA appointed a new manager with a shared service background. The CHIA are reviewing the revenue structure as Cambridgeshire County Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group are due to withdraw all funding from 1st April 2018. Members stated that the CCG's decision to withdraw funding was questionable.

Members asked for reassurance that the CHIA are thoroughly reviewing the budget in order to account for the withdrawal of funding from the County Council and the CCG. The Executive Councillor assured the Panel that work on the budget is being progressed and there is an ongoing review of the charges.

When asked what is the impact on the shared service as a result of the ceasing of funding by the County Council and the CCG, Members were informed that the funding provided is currently £40,000 however the shortfall has been mitigated by fee increases.

In response to the question, does the CHIA maintain a handyman service and if so are they maximising the use of the service, Members were not explicitly told that there is a handyman service however they were informed that the service is trying to separate the jobs that won't take too long from the jobs that will.

Following a comment from a Member that they couldn't understand the demographics and the reason why people in some areas were applying for DFGs, the Panel was informed that the majority of people who apply for a DFG are living in properties run by Registered Providers and this was to be expected as DFGs are means tested.

Concern was expressed in regards to the responses to the question 'work fully met your expectations' which showed that 46.8% of residents in the District had their expectations met compared to 100% in Cambridge City Council area and 94.5% in South Cambridgeshire District Council area. It was noted that there is more demand in Huntingdonshire and that delays in delivering the adaptations does have an impact on the expectations.

During a discussion on the development of more bungalows, the Panel was informed that the current Government thinking is that there should be more homes that are accessible for life and not necessarily more bungalows.

In response to the question could care homes and bungalows be delivered using exception sites, the Panel was informed that exception sites are designed to meet the needs of the community that otherwise would not be met so if bungalows are needed then exception sites can be used for that purposed. In regards to care homes, exception sites would not be used because they are commercially viable.

The Panel recognises that the areas for improvement have been recognised and suggests that the Portfolio Holder and Head of Service keeps an eye on buildings for life and the benefits it could provide for Huntingdonshire.

31. HINCHINGBROOKE HOSPITAL MEETING UPDATE

Councillor T Hayward introduced the item by informing Members that he was asked by the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Communities and Environment) to attend the Annual Public Meeting for Hinchingsbrooke Health Care NHS Trust, on his behalf, on 13th July 2017. The Panel was informed that whatever the Trust was reporting at the meeting may be different now as there is a new management team in place.

Councillor Hayward highlighted to Members that one of the issues that worried him was that if there was a crisis then the Trust's expertise would focus on Peterborough and Stamford at the expense of Hinchingsbrooke. In addition, it was not written into the contracts of staff that they might be required to work at Hinchingsbrooke.

There are no developments planned for Hinchingsbrooke Hospital whereas there are developments planned for Peterborough and Stamford. Councillor Hayward added that Hinchingsbrooke is short staffed and morale is low. Another concern expressed by Councillor Hayward is that the Council of Governors is biased in favour of the north of the Trust.

A Member noted that all the points Councillor Hayward have raised were raised by the public and the Panel previously at the Special Meetings on the issue of the Trust merger in 2016.

The Panel thanked Councillor Hayward for the report and resolved to take forward the concerns to the next meeting when the Chief Executive of the Trust would be in attendance.

(At 8.44pm, during the discussion of this item, Councillor R Fuller left the meeting and did not return.)

(At 8.47pm, during the discussion of this item, Councillor P L E Bucknell left the meeting.)

(At 8.49pm, during the discussion of the item, Councillor P L E Bucknell returned to the meeting.)

(At 8.53pm, on the conclusion of this item, Councillor T Hayward left the meeting and did not return.)

32. AIR QUALITY IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE

With the aid of a report by Iain Green, Senior Public Health Manager Environmental and Planning at Cambridgeshire County Council (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Air Quality in Huntingdonshire was discussed by the Panel.

Members were informed that the report was presented to the Cambridgeshire County Council Health Committee in March 2017 following concerns over the air quality across Cambridgeshire. It was confirmed that the Council's air quality officer had input into the report before publication.

A pollution hotspot was defined as a concentration of pollution. In Huntingdonshire there are pollution hotspots on the A14 Viaduct, Huntingdon ring road and High Street, St Neots. In regards to High Street, St Neots the issue is the narrow streets which funnel the pollution. Mr Green informed Members that Huntingdonshire is not different to any other District in the country.

Members were informed that the responsibility for tackling the pollution hotspots lies with the County Council as the transport and planning authority. The public could be encouraged to use public transport, cycle or walk instead of using their vehicles, especially for short journeys.

In response to the question, what options are there to reduce pollution, Mr Green stated that there are few options available other than encouraging people to change their travel behaviour either by incentivising or discouraging them.

Following a question in regards to traffic calming measures, Members were informed that in terms of pollution the better traffic calming measures are those that encourage the traffic to slow down but not stop completely.

When asked about pollution in rural areas, Mr Green informed the Panel that there is much less chance that the pollution reaches a harmful level.

The Panel expressed concern that the buses in Huntingdonshire are heavy pollutants, Mr Green did not comment specifically on buses running in the District but did state there have been issues with the European Union Standards used for buses as the standard on paper does not always match the standard in practice.

The Panel thanked Mr Green for the report and attending the meeting and resolved to revisit the issue of air quality at a future meeting.

33. ONE LEISURE ACTIVE LIFESTYLES ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17

With the aid of a report by the Sports Development Manager and the Active Lifestyles and Health Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the One Leisure Lifestyles Annual Report 2016/17 was presented to the Panel.

After a brief introduction of the report a Member asked about the high turnover of staff. In response, the Panel was informed that a high number of the jobs are entry points for people, they then leave and go elsewhere. What is hoped is that there are opportunities for those people to re-join the Council at a later date.

In response to a question regarding collaboration with Parish and Town Councils, the Panel was informed that in regards to sports activities the team works with Parish and Town Councils to offer a variety of activities.

Following a question on Health Walks, Members were informed that the Council aims to have a Health Walk with the average participation of around 15 to 20 people. However the problem for the Council is not the number of participants but the number of walk leaders and there is currently a recruitment drive for more walk leaders. Some of the walks are under threat as a result of a decrease in the number of walk leaders.

Members were informed that the service has adopted a new business model to generate additional income streams and support the financial sustainability of the service.

34. 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 all the Panel's work programmes since the last meeting.

The Panel noted their decision to establish a task and finish group to refresh and review the Tree Strategy and the associated Action Plan and requested more work on the issue of Air Quality in Huntingdonshire.

Chairman