

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (PERFORMANCE AND GROWTH) held in Civic Suite 0.1B, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Thursday, 14th June 2018.

- PRESENT: Councillor D B Dew – Chairman.
- Councillors L A Besley, J C Cooper-Marsh, Dr P L R Gaskin, D A Giles, M S Grice, K P Gulson, J Neish, S Wakeford and D J Wells.
- APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors S J Corney and J P Morris.
- IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors R Fuller and J A Gray.

4. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economy and Growth) held on 8th March 2018 and the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth) held on 23rd May 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were received.

6. 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 June 2018 to 30th September 2018.

7. AUTHORISATION OF MODIFICATIONS TO THE HUNTINGDONSHIRE LOCAL PLAN TO 2036

With the aid of a report by the Planning Service Manager (Policy, Implementation and Strategic Development) the report on the authorisation of modifications to the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 was presented to the Panel.

The Panel was informed that the report is asking them to consider a matter of procedure and not policy. The Planning Service Manager (Policy, Implementation and Strategic Development) informed Members that the inspector wants to begin inspection in July and that the report is recommending that the Head of Development writes to Inspector inviting modifications in order for the Local Plan to be found legally compliant and sound.

Members were informed of the issues facing the Development Management Committee when considering new developments and currently there is a tilted balance in the developers favour. The way to get back to balanced position is to have an updated Local Plan.

In response to the question regarding the provision for alterations to go through Overview and Scrutiny or Full Council, the Panel was informed that non-significant alterations would be made quickly and that significant alterations would be subject to a public consultation. It was explained that significant alterations are those that materially alter the Local Plan.

Following a question regarding two sites at St Neots it was confirmed that the Local Plan has not changed since December 2017. The two sites brought forward have been brought forward outside the plan and will be dealt with through the Development Management process.

A Member asked what the reporting arrangements of the use of the delegated authority are. They were informed that all Members received bulletins with details of planning updates.

In response to a question asking if the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELLA) is included in the inspection, the Panel was informed that it is a background document and not part of the Local Plan but it could be used if more housing is required to be included in the Local Plan.

The Panel agreed to the recommendations contained in the report.

8. INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE REPORT 2017/18 - QUARTER 4

With the aid of a report by the Corporate Team Manager and the Finance Manager (a copy of which has been appended in the Minute Book) the Integrated Performance Report 2017/18 – Quarter 4 was presented to the Panel.

As the Members had the final performance for 2017/18, the Policy, Performance and Transformation Manager was in attendance and informed the Panel of the highlights for 2017/18. Members also received the highlights of the Council's financial position from the Head of Resources.

When queried the increase in complaints about missed bins, the Panel was informed that the reason for the increase is because of the Waste Round Reconfiguration. As a result of the reconfiguration, the days of bin collections had been changed and different drivers and crews had been allocated to the rounds and this led to some issues on the lack of knowledge. In addition, small lanes that were not on maps are where most bins were missed.

Following a question in regards to Project Management, Members were advised that some projects had a 'Red' status because the deadlines were unrealistic to begin with. The Panel questioned what was being done to ensure that the setting of deadlines is realistic and that the management of projects, in general, is more robust. It was explained that the Project Management Governance Board is taking a stronger role in holding Project Managers to account. There have

been changes to the business case templates, more training has been provided and there is greater challenge from those approving and overseeing individual projects.

A Member questioned why the report mentioned homelessness prevention but there is not a corporate indicator on homelessness prevention. In response, Members were informed that the service does measure homelessness and this is regularly reviewed by the Executive Councillor but that the indicator included in the 2017/18 Corporate Plan was the average length of stay in temporary accommodation. In addition to this the Council has a trailblazer project to tackle homelessness.

A Member queried whether it would be possible to identify the extra cost of getting back on track where a target is not being achieved so decisions can be taken on whether it is cost effective to do this. In response, it was explained that as the finance is complex and interlinked it would be difficult to do so.

The question was asked whether the improvement on the delivery of Disabled Facility Grants is it continuing. In response, the Panel was informed that improvement is continuing however it is difficult as every year the Council are paying out more than they are receiving in grant from Central Government.

A Member asked whether the targets are moveable. In response, it was explained that a target is set at the beginning of the year but there is the opportunity to review this and if a good case is made to do so or circumstances have significantly changed then a revised target can be proposed for Member approval.

The Head of Resources highlighted the Council's financial performance for 2017/18 which included the £500k overspend and the savings achieved through Zero Based Budgeting.

In response to a question about the overall cost of not filling vacancies and the impact on staff and service performance, the Panel was informed that a report containing the relevant information was due to be submitted to and discussed at the Employment Committee meeting on 28th June 2018.

The Panel asked for a further explanation of why Operations overspent their budget in 2017/18. It was explained that the Waste Round Reconfiguration did not produce the savings anticipated and as a result the Council missed the target on missed bins. This also led to an increased number of calls to the Call Centre which resulted in the target for calls answered by the Call Centre being missed. The Executive Councillor for Resources advised the Panel that the waste collection budget was also affected by the falling value of recyclable materials worldwide and rates of contamination in recycling bins. These issues are likely to continue to affect the budget in 2018/19 so further work is needed to encourage residents to sort their waste into the correct bins.

9. TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18

With the aid of a report by the Head of Resources (a copy of which is

appended in the Minute Book) the Treasury Management Annual Report 2017/18 was presented to the Panel. It was explained that Treasury Management Annual Report is the about the day to day management of the Council's finances.

It was noted that the Council had loans to Huntingdon Regional College and Luminus and that since the loans were established those organisations had both been incorporated into larger organisations. However, it was clarified that those loans are secured against buildings.

A Member asked whether it was possible to refinance the loans in order to achieve a better interest rate. In response, it was explained this was possible however the Council would end up paying a penalty to the lender (Public Works Loan Board) to do so. This is particularly the case as the Council is holding loans with long maturity dates.

When asked, would it be better to move money to an investment with a better rate, the Panel was informed that the aim of Treasury Management is to spread money around in order to mitigate the risk of a counterparty failure. If the Council consolidated the money in one investment then the risk would not be spread and the Council's entire invested funds would be at risk.

An explanation was given to the Panel on the borrowing the Council does and the types of investment it does including the location of those investments.

(At 8.52pm, during the consideration of this item, Councillor M S Grice left the meeting.)

(At 8.54pm, during the consideration of this item, Councillor M S Grice entered the meeting.)

10. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME - AGREEING THE AGENDA

With the aid of a presentation by the Corporate Director – Delivery, Members discussed potential Forward Work Programme and how it would work practically. The Panel was asked to consider how they can add value to their work and how it can benefit the Council and its residents.

The Panel was informed that the Council's Annual Governance Statement has highlighted the following risks to the Council: Housing Affordability; growing number of years of ill health; wider economic environment; skills levels and educational attainment, and partner agency operational pressure.

Members were informed that the challenge for Huntingdonshire economically is not getting left behind and whether an industrial strategy would be worthwhile. The Panel was asked to consider how the Council could help make the economy successful.

The Panel highlighted the following areas of interest but stated they would give them more thought at the next Panel meeting:

- How can more businesses be attracted to the District.

- Joint working with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Customers and Partnerships).

(At 9.11pm, during the consideration of this item, Councillor Dr P L R Gaskin left the meeting and did not return.)

Chairman