

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (PERFORMANCE AND GROWTH) held in Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 5th March 2019.

PRESENT: Councillor D B Dew – Chairman.

Councillors J C Cooper-Marsh, S J Corney, Mrs A Dickinson, Dr P L R Gaskin, D A Giles, M S Grice, K P Gulson, J P Morris, S Wakeford, D J Wells and J E White.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors R Fuller and D M Tysoe.

### 61. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 5th February 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### 62. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

### 63. 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 had been prepared by the Executive Leader for the period 1st March to 30th June 2019.

### 64. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

that Councillor S J Corney be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

### 65. MARKETS - ANNUAL REVIEW

Consideration was given to a report by the Business Development Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) containing the Annual Review of Huntingdonshire Markets 2018/19. The report was augmented with a presentation by the Business Development Manager and the Markets Officer. In the course of the presentation Members were reminded of the historical financial performance of the market service and acquainted with the initiatives employed in Huntingdon and St Ives that had improved the markets and the service's financial position. These included changing their location and layout, introducing publicity and events in partnership with BID Huntingdon, and differential pricing for pitches.

The Markets Officer went on to outline some of the challenges being experienced. Cyclists frequently posed a hazard and vehicular access

and parking had to be managed and occasionally resulted in confrontation with members of the public. Furthermore, internet traders had an unfair competitive advantage. In conclusion, Members' attention was drawn to the Council's commitment to retaining the markets, their wider benefits to the towns and the planned improvements designed further to improve them.

The Panel commented on the benefits the markets brought to Huntingdon and St Ives by making them more vibrant and increasing footfall. Members endorsed the provision of other events to attract customers. In response to a question by a Member, it was confirmed that Officers always tried to accommodate requests from charities for pitches.

The Panel discussed the measures that might be employed to increase the viability of the markets. Following a question by a Member, the Markets Officer advised that there were differences at the Huntingdon and St Ives markets in the profiles of customers, which he was aware of and would use to design future market strategies.

Members gave extensive consideration to the pricing of pitches. It was noted that there had not been an increase in this respect in the last two years. It had, therefore, been planned to introduce an increase in line with inflation in April this year. Since that decision, there had been a marked downturn in trade and in the number of traders taking pitches. This reflected general retail trends. While it was accepted that in order to maintain the markets' quality pitches should not be free, Members were of the view that other options should be considered. It was suggested that the Council should plan to achieve a cost-neutral service and the price increase should not be introduced. A number of Members supported this suggestion. Another Member however, also suggested that if the increase was applied, the additional income might be used to pay for additional attractions. Officers expressed the view that this was not likely to have a tangible effect but using more of the surplus might generate the required additional footfall. It was agreed to convey the Panel's views to the Executive Councillor for Operations and Regulation to inform a review of the Council's strategic approach to the markets.

## **66. EAST WEST RAIL CONSULTATION**

Councillor R Fuller, Deputy Executive Leader and Executive Councillor for Housing, Planning and Economic Development, introduced a report by the Planning Services Manager (Growth) on a consultation on options for East West Rail between Bedford and Cambridge. A supplementary report containing recommendations on the options also was submitted. Copies of the reports are appended in the Minute Book.

Councillor Fuller introduced the reports and referred to the potential benefits of the preferred options for the District and in particular for St Neots. He stressed that the recommendations had been reached following consultation with Councillors of all parties and with other councils. They also corresponded with the strategic approach adopted for the new Local Plan.

Members discussed the considerations to be taken into account, including the preference for an integrated transport solution with the road network and the need to retain the existing station in addition to a new one. They also commented on the cost of the preferred approach, which significantly exceeded that of the other options, and the challenge this represented if it was to be delivered.

RESOLVED

that the recommended preferred options be endorsed and the Panel's comments be taken into account during preparation of the Council's formal response to the East West Rail consultation.

**67. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED

that the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains information relating to the financial of business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

**68. SHARED SERVICES BUSINESS PLANS**

Consideration was given to a report by the Corporate Director (Services) to which were attached Business Plans for each of the Council's Shared Services for 2019/20. Copies of the report and the Business Plans are appended in the Minute Book.

Councillor D M Tysoe, Executive Councillor for Customer and Digital, informed the Panel that since the Council started sharing services with Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils, continuous progress had been made. As a result there had been a positive change in the way the Council operated. He also referred to the challenges experienced by the Shared Services.

Members were reminded of the Business Plans' objectives in previous years. The Business Plans for 2019/20 showed that these had been achieved and demonstrated that the services were being effective. Considerable effort had been put into clearly defining the services' priorities for 2019/20.

The Panel discussed the challenges and risks associated with the Shared Services. Having also considered the future direction of sharing, on the basis of the financial, resilience and effectiveness achievements reported and the fact that the development objectives had been produced following extensive consultation with the Councils' client officers, it was

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be recommended to approve the Shared Services Business Plans 2019/20 appended to the report now submitted.

**69. RE-ADMITTANCE OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED

that the press and public be re-admitted to the meeting.

**70. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

By means of the report by the Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny), the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme was presented to the Panel. A copy of the report is appended in the Minute Book.

Chairman