

## Decision Digest

Edition 111

**Monthly summary of the decisions taken at meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny and other Panels for the period 4th to 28<sup>th</sup> January 2011.**

### **ECONOMIC IMPACT OF A14 UPGRADE**

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) has considered a report on the implications for the District of the Government's decision not to proceed with improvements to the A14.

To take forward the issue, the Panel decided that they wanted to engage local MPs in a co-ordinated approach to lobbying the Government with a view to achieving the Council's aim of upgrading the A14 in a more cost effective way than previously planned

### **CUSTOMER SERVICES**

A petition containing 1,865 signatories objecting to proposals to close the Library and Community Information Shop in Yaxley was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being). The petition had been prepared on behalf of Yaxley Parish Council and residents of Yaxley, Stilton, Farcet, Folksworth and surrounding villages and had been referred to the Panel from the Council meeting in December.

In addition, the Panel has received a presentation on proposals for service changes within Customer Services, which was also considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being). As part of this, both Panels have been advised of the likely savings which could be achieved from the proposals and the impact of such

changes on District Council customers. Each Customer Service Centre has been reviewed to take into account customer profiles at each locality and the level of local need.

Following a lengthy discussion, the Panel for Economic Well-Being has asked the Executive Councillor for Finance and Customer Services to take into account their proposals regarding options for the long term delivery of customer services during the decision making process on the future of the service including alternative methods of delivery, the possibility of using a roving officer funded from the existing Customer Service Centre budget and alternative delivery through libraries, the post office and other mechanisms.

The Panel for Social Well-Being has expressed concern at the impact of the proposals on the voluntary organisations that currently utilise existing premises and the Council's increased reliance on local libraries to deliver its services. The latter was considered in the context of the County Council's review of library services which was expected to result in the closure of some facilities across the County. Other matters that were discussed included the terms of the building leases for each of the Centres and the option of engaging with Peterborough City Council to provide housing and benefits services.

**ONE LEISURE FINANCE & PERFORMANCE**

The Overview & Scrutiny Panels (Economic & Social Well-Being) have received presentations on the finance and performance of the District Council's Leisure Centres. As part of this, attention was drawn to the level of investment made at each of the Centres, the impact that this has made on net outturn and the number of admissions for each Centre. Members have also been acquainted with the level of management and administration costs which remained outside of the control of the General Manager, One Leisure and noted details of issues that were currently being investigated with a view to achieving savings for the Council which included staffing levels and pay.

As part of their deliberations, the Panels have discussed the level of central support charges, staffing, and a variety of socio-economic factors.

The Social Well-Being Panel has discussed a number of matters including the feasibility of putting the Leisure Centres into a Trust, the likely decrease in income from local schools in the future, the practices employed by private sector operators of similar facilities, the level of expenditure on employees, the possibility of reducing Centre opening hours and the value of the business and its assets.

Following a lengthy discussion and in recognition of their wish to give further consideration to the figures, the Economic Well-Being Panel has agreed to establish a joint working party to review the figures further. Councillors J D Ablewhite, S Greenall, N J Guyatt and Mr R Hall have subsequently been appointed to serve on the Working Party and the Social Well-Being Panel will nominate Members at its February meeting.

**DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS**

At its January meeting, the Development Management Panel determined seven applications of which six were approved and one refused. The Head of Planning Services was authorised to determine an application for a new dwelling in Hemingford Abbots following the receipt of late amendments to the original plans.

In terms of those applications of wider interest to Members, the Panel refused an application for four wind turbines on land west of Bicton Industrial Park, Kimbolton and approved, subject to conditions prompted by representations made to the meeting, the proposed development of a four storey car park to provide 406 spaces and reconfiguration of the existing surface car park adjacent to Sainsbury's supermarket in Huntingdon town centre.

**FINANCIAL MONITORING**

The Head of Financial Services has drawn attention to the Cabinet's variations to the approved Capital Programme and spending variations in the revenue budget for the current year. It was noted that the expected outturn of revenue expenditure was now £23.1m which was £0.7m less than assumed in the draft 2011/12 budget. The reduction was mainly due to one-off items and service managers implementing saving plans ready for 2011/12. It will no longer be necessary to transfer savings to the savings reserve as the latest projections suggest that the necessary savings for 2011/12 are achievable.

**SAFER HOMES SCHEME**

In February 2010 the Council, Luminus and Age Concern established a Safer Homes Scheme in Huntingdonshire aimed at providing a service for older

and vulnerable households whereby small repair jobs are available free of charge or at low cost as a way of maintaining safety within their homes. Having been advised of the achievements of the scheme to date in supporting vulnerable people to live independently, the Cabinet has agreed to release the necessary funding for the continuation of the scheme from the Medium Term Plan.

## **HUNTINGDONSHIRE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP VIEWS ON CCTV**

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) has noted the outcome of the Huntingdonshire Community Safety Partnership's discussions on the value of CCTV within the District. The Constabulary also noted the strong support for the retention of the service by Cambridgeshire Constabulary. The Constabulary also has indicated that they will be willing to engage in discussions with the Council with a view to preserving the service. Correspondence has also been received from St Ives Town Council requesting the Council to reconsider its budgetary proposals.

Of the matters discussed, the Panel has concluded that the service should be preserved, particularly in light of the level of investment already made to it by the Council. Further consideration of the proposals will be provided at the February meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) when the final budget is due to be considered by Members.

## **HUNTINGDONSHIRE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP: HEALTH AND WELL-BEING THEMATIC GROUP**

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) have received details of the Health and Well-

Being Thematic Group of the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership (HSP) including its objectives, terms of reference, membership and the current business under consideration. Discussion has taken place on the achievement of the Action Plan for the July-September 2010 period. Particular mention has been made of those areas where targets have not been achieved.

## **STUDY: CONSULTATION PROCESSES**

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) has been acquainted with the outcome of an initial meeting of the Consultation Processes Working Group. Councillor R J West has been appointed rapporteur for the Working Group.

## **CAMBRIDGESHIRE ADULTS WELL-BEING AND HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

An update on matters currently being considered by the Cambridgeshire Adults Well-Being and Health Scrutiny Committee has been delivered to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being). The Hinchingsbrooke Hospital Working Group appointed by the Committee has met with Circle, the franchisee appointed to take over the management of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital to discuss their approach to running the Hospital.

## **CAMBRIDGESHIRE SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

It was reported to Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) that a meeting of the Cambridgeshire Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee had been held, where consideration was given to whether the Committee should pursue rural crime as a topic for scrutiny. An invitation would be

extended to all Cambridgeshire authorities to nominate a representative to join a Working Group to investigate the role and effectiveness of the Rural Crime Action Team.

#### **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SOCIAL WELL-BEING) – PROGRESS**

With the agreement of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being), the Panel for Social Well-Being has decided to transfer the study on the health implications of the night time economy to its work programme. Background information in this respect will be submitted to a future meeting.

#### **LICENSING AND PROTECTION PANEL**

The Panel has considered the following -

##### **Designated Public Places Order**

The Panel has supported the creation of a Designated Public Places Order for the Quayside and Warners Park area of St Ives. The Order which will give Police and PCSOs greater powers to control consumption of alcohol and related disorder in the area and will be finalised subject to the consideration of any representations made following the publication of a notice in the press.

##### **Fees and Charges**

Members have agreed to an increase of 7.5% in the majority of licensing fees and charges set by the Council for 2011/12. The increase is aimed at recovering the cost of providing the service and for this reason the cost of both the initial issue and the renewal of a sex establishment licence has risen to £2.5k. In view of the current level of fees, the cost of a street trading licence has been increased by 2.5%.

#### **Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill**

The Panel has been advised of the proposed changes to the Bill which are considered to be both timely and relevant. The changes include provision for the licensing authority to take appropriate steps in order to promote the licensing objectives and the ability to suspend a licence for non payment of the annual fee.

#### **Conditions for Sexual Entertainment Venues**

The Panel has approved new and amended standard conditions applicable to the licensing of sex shops, sex cinemas and sexual entertainment venues. The conditions cover the operation of sex shops and sex cinemas and live performances at sexual entertainment venues.