

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE
WAYTEMORE ROOM, BISHOP'S
STORTFORD ON TUESDAY,
13 NOVEMBER 2007 AT 7.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs D L E Hollebbon (Chairman).
Councillors N P Clark, A D Dodd, Mrs J Mayes,
G McAndrew, J O Ranger, M Wood.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillors L O Haysey, P A Ruffles.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Karl Chui	- Performance Officer
Philip Hamberger	- Director of Internal Services
Peter Mannings	- Democratic Services Assistant
Will O'Neill	- Head of Community and Cultural Services
Lois Prior	- Head of Strategic Direction (shared) and Communications Manager
Kevin Steptoe	- Head of Planning and Building Control

353 APOLOGY

Apologies for absence were submitted of behalf of Councillors A P Jackson and M Pope.

354 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 August 2007 were submitted. In respect of Minute 179 – Corporate Health Check – Quarterly Monitoring (April – June 2007). A Member commented that a report on the review of IT was

now being submitted to Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee on 4 December 2007.

The Committee agreed that a report on the review of IT be submitted Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee on 4 December 2007.

RESOLVED - that (A) the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 August 2007 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

(B) a report on the review of IT be submitted to Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee on 4 December 2007.

DIS

355 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman thanked Members for their contribution to the good work of the Committee in scrutinising the performance of the Council. The Chairman expressed her hope that Members would continue to support the new scrutiny structure.

The Chairman thanked Officers and Executive portfolio holders for their hard work in support of the Committee.

A Member thanked Councillor Mrs D L E Hollebon for her hard work in chairing the Committee.

The Chairman requested that, with the consent of Members, the order of the agenda be amended.

RESOLVED ITEMS

ACTION

356 CORPORATE HEALTHCHECK – QUARTERLY MONITORING (JULY - SEPTEMBER 2007)

The Leader of the Council submitted a report which set out, on an exception basis, issues relating to finance, performance and risk monitoring for the Council for the second quarter period of July to September 2007. The report contained a breakdown of revenue and service

information for each Directorate. Members considered the report in detail.

In response to a query from a Member in respect of the Revenue Financial Summary of the report as now submitted. The Director of Internal Services reported that the authority was operating at a 6% vacancy factor. It was his expectation that this figure would decrease.

In respect of a further query from the Member relating to IT issues, the Director reported that these issues did not solely relate to the IT section. He advised Members that the ownership of the projects managed by the IT section should be shared across other directorates.

The Committee was advised that an IT action plan would be submitted to the next meeting of Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee. DIS

A Member highlighted the importance of IT as a growth area for the Council. The Director reported that not all efficiency savings in IT had IT based solutions.

A Member expressed concern in respect of the yet to be quantified overspend on the Land Drainage budget. The Director undertook to e-mail an update on this to the Committee after the meeting. DIS

A Member expressed concerns in respect of problems relation to the Castle Moat. The Committee was advised that the matter would be reported to the next meeting of Environment Scrutiny Committee and would be included in the Capital Programme. DIS

In response to a query from a Member in respect of joint working with neighbouring authorities on building control issues, the Head of Planning and Building Control advised that joint working was being considered as part of the pathfinder process.

The Head of Planning and Building Control reported that new regulations and the energy efficiency agenda required

Officers to have detailed skills in these areas and also in respect of sustainable buildings. Members were advised that rather than being able to recruit Officers with the appropriate skills it would be a requirement to fund training for Officers so that these skills could be obtained.

A Member highlighted the importance of employing Officers equipped with the necessary skills to meet the high expectations of the modern workplace.

Members were advised that a report in respect of complaints and parking performance indicators would be submitted to Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee on 4 December 2007. It was noted that a report in respect of leisure performance indicators would also be submitted to that Committee. CE

A Member queried Car Park Income and Jackson Square and abandoned vehicles. The Performance Officer undertook to ensure that the relevant Director would respond to the Member by e-mail. CE

A Member expressed concerns in respect of the level of scrutiny of the Capital Programme of the report now submitted.

A Member stated that the Capital Programme had been scrutinised by the Policy Development Scrutiny Committee.

A Member highlighted opportunities for Member input into Town Centre Enhancement Projects and the terms of reference of the corporate group. The Head of Planning and Building Control undertook to feed back Members comments back to the Corporate Group when this had been established. DNS

RESOLVED – that (A) Environment Scrutiny Committee be requested to consider adding works on the sluice gates on the River Stort and the Castle Moat to the Committee's work programme; DCCS

(B) Officers continue discussions with other local authorities in respect of staff recruitment and retention;

(C) Officers ensure job vacancies for hard to fill posts are filled as quickly as possible; and

(D) Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee be requested to scrutinise the Capital Programme as part of the Committee's work programme.

357 PLANNING ENFORCEMENT REVIEW

The Head of Planning and Building Control submitted a report in respect of a review for the planning enforcement function which commenced early in 2007. The Head of Planning and Building Control referred to recommendations which Officers had implemented.

The Committee was advised that a draft report had been submitted to Officers following an external review. There had been a delay in implementing recommendations owing to staffing difficulties in the Development Control section.

A Member referred to an absent Member's wish that the draft report's recommendations should be implemented as soon as possible. Officers were complimented on training sessions that had been arranged for Members in respect of Enforcement Action.

A Member referred to the need to be guided by Officers in respect of the most appropriate method for approaching the public on Enforcement Matters. The Head of Planning and Building Control reported that progress had been made in resource sharing between the Development Control and the Legal Services sections.

Officers were complimented for bringing so many Enforcement matters to the attention of Development Control Committee. The Committee noted the report.

RESOLVED - that (A) the action taken by the Head of Planning and Building Control in implementing the recommendations be noted; and

(B) Environment Scrutiny Committee be requested to include Planning Enforcement to its work programme.

358 LEISURE CENTRE CONTRACT MONITORING PERFORMANCE JULY 2007 TO SEPTEMBER 2007

The Head of Community and Cultural Services submitted a report on the performance of the Leisure Management Contract. The Committee was advised that the budget position as at September 2007 was significantly better than the Council had been faced with in recent months.

It was emphasised that although the revised budget forecast of £783,544 for 2007/08 exceeded the Council's budget by £67,544, Officers considered this a significant improvement from the budget position at the start of the year.

The Head of Community and Cultural Services highlighted the credit figure of £12,491 as being evidence of an increasingly positive situation in respect of the performance of the Leisure Contract. A Member praised Officers on the credit figure of £12,491.

RESOLVED - that the report be received.

359 COMMUNITY VOICE ACTION PLAN

The Head of Community and Cultural Services submitted a report which detailed the progress against the Community Voice Action Plan, as attached to the Appendix now submitted.

The Committee was advised on the progress against the individual recommendations of the Community Voice Task and Finish Group. It was noted that an update report

DCCS

ACTION

would be submitted to Community Scrutiny Committee in 6 months time.

A Member expressed concern on the need to ensure that Sawbridgeworth Area Community Voice covered a wider area. Overstaffing of Community Voice meetings was a cause for concern. The Head of Strategic Direction (shared) and Communications Manager and the Head of Community and Cultural Services stated that this was currently being addressed.

CE/DCCS

The Head of Community and Cultural Services confirmed that the Statement on Community Involvement when published would explain how the public could get involved, subject to resources, in the work of the Council. Initially a report needed to be submitted to Community Scrutiny Committee.

DCCS

The Executive Member for Community Development, Leisure and Culture stated that the individual concerns of Community Voice Chairmen could be addressed through Community Voice Briefings.

RESOLVED – that progress against the Community Voice Action Plan be noted.

360 WORK PROGRAMME 2007/08

The Chief Executive submitted a report detailing the work of the Performance Scrutiny Committee to date and identified some items that the Committee might wish to recommend for scrutiny by the Council's new scrutiny committees in the second half of 2007/08.

The Chairman commented that the items on the work programme should not be lost and the individual items should be taken forward to the relevant Scrutiny Committee for discussion.

RESOLVED – that the report be used as a basis for recommending future work of the Council's new

ACTION

scrutiny committees.

361 SERVICE PLANS 2007/08 PROGRESS REPORT

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive on the Service Plan actions for 2007/08 which required a revised completion date.

A Member highlighted the importance of the information report and thanked Officers for bringing it to Committee.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

362 2007/08 EAST HERTS CPA IMPROVEMENT PLAN – PROGRESS REPORT

A report was submitted by the Leader of the Council on the six-month progress on East Herts Council’s 2007/08 CPA Improvement Plan for the last 6 months of the year.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm.

Chairman
Date