

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE WAYTEMORE ROOM,
BISHOP'S STORTFORD ON TUESDAY,
22 APRIL 2008 AT 7.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs D L E Hollebon (Chairman).
Councillors S A Bull, Mrs R Cheswright,
D Clark (substitute for N P Clark), P Grethe,
Mrs D Hone, J J Taylor, M Wood and
C Woodward.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillors M R Alexander, R Beeching,
L O Haysey and R L Parker.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Claire Bennett	- Housing Strategy and Policy Manager
Lorraine Blackburn	- Committee Secretary
Lizzie Clarke	- Community Safety Co-ordinator
Simon Drinkwater	- Director of Neighbourhood Services
Mark Kingsland	- Health and Fitness Development Officer
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
Will O'Neill	- Head of Community and Cultural Services
George A Robertson	- Director of Customer and Community Services
Jan Spong	- Head of Community Safety
Tracy Strange	- Head of Health and Housing

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Colin Bird	}	Bishop's Stortford
Janet Bird		Citizens Advice Bureau
Gail Cambery		
Keith Chambers		

644 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor N P Clark. It was noted that Councillor D Clark was substituting for Councillor N Clark.

645 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman expressed her thanks to everyone in furthering the work of the Committee. Councillors D Clark, M Wood and C Woodward thanked the Chairman for ably steering the work of the Committee and her Chairmanship over the years.

The Chairman welcomed representatives from the Bishop's Stortford Citizens Advice Bureau.

646 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor S A Bull declared a personal interest in the matter referred to at Minute 649 - Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) in that he was a Member of the CAB.

RESOLVED ITEMSACTION647 COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2008 be received as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

648 HEALTH ENGAGEMENT PANEL: 21 FEBRUARY

AND 26 MARCH 2008

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Health Engagement Panel meetings held on 21 February and 26 March 2008 be received.

649 CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU (CAB) - PRESENTATION

Keith Chambers provided Members with a presentation on the work of the Citizens Advice Service in East Hertfordshire. He commented that it was one of the largest CABs in Hertfordshire. He explained that all CABs were separate charities but affiliated to the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux. Quality standards were set and performance was monitored. The aims of the service and how these complemented the Council's priorities was explained.

Mr Chambers provided Members with a breakdown of the types of advice given. Funding sources were explained. It was noted that East Herts Council contributed £233,000 (75%) of the total funding needed to run the service. He commented that it was a requirement of the Service Level Agreement to report to the Council on how funds had been spent.

Ms Cambery commented that, by far the greatest amount of advice was given in relation to benefits, followed by debt and employment. Other categories of advice were explained.

Mr Chambers explained how working in partnership helped the CAB reach its full potential and how funding compared with other Authorities. He commented that there would always be people who would need the kind of service that the CAB delivered. The CAB was able to cross work with other agencies on multi agency issues and was well equipped with trained advisors providing impartial advice. The CABs' work was totally compatible with the Council's priorities in providing help for the most vulnerable sections of the community. Mr Chambers commented that it was important to work in partnership to sustain these important

ACTION

services.

A number of Members' questions were asked and responded to.

The Chairman thanked representatives for their helpful presentation.

RESOLVED – that the presentation be received.

650 EAST HERTS HOMELESS STRATEGY 2008 - 2013

The Head of Housing and Health submitted a report on the Council's new Homelessness and Homeless Prevention Strategy and the Action Plan for 2008 – 2013. This was the second strategy to be published.

It was noted that the Homeless Act 2002 had placed a stronger duty on Councils to prevent homelessness. A key aim of the Act was to ensure that Housing Authorities adopted a comprehensive and strategic approach to managing and preventing all forms of homelessness. A significant recent change was to bring back in-house the Council's housing advice, homeless and housing register services in April 2005. The Council and its partners ensured that the Strategy continued to build on themes in the original Strategy, but with a more proactive approach to the prevention of homelessness.

Councillor D Clark commented on the absence of information within the action plan and performance monitoring information. Assurances were provided that this information would be inserted as soon as it was available.

In relation to supported accommodation and the role provided by the YMCA, Officers advised that the Council provided five units of "move on accommodation". Providing assistance to 16-17 year olds who because of their age, could not enter into a tenancy agreement was being investigated. A working group had identified five potential sites which could provide additional accommodation for

ACTION

young people.

Councillor R L Parker commented that rough sleepers were not considered a problem within the District. It had been estimated at only 5-6 people on any one night. It was accepted that this might not be a true representation of the position.

In response to a question in relation to housing stock being provided to people within specific age groups, it was noted that Housing Associations provided housing stock to meet their needs within budgetary constraints. Various sheltered flats within Buntingford were mentioned, which Members thought was attributable to the fact that they did not have a garden or lift.

Councillor R L Parker commented that the report would be submitted to the Executive for approval. He thanked the Officers for producing such a good Strategy and for their hard work.

RESOLVED – that (A) the Executive be informed that Community Scrutiny Committee supports the adoption of the East Herts Homelessness and Homeless Prevention Strategy 2008-2013 and the Action Plan; and

(B) a report on the progress of the Action Plan be submitted annually to Community Scrutiny Committee.

DNS

651 COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY 2005 - 2008 FINAL PROGRESS AND INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMUNITY SAFETY PLAN (2008 – 2011)

The Director of Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on the progress made on the delivery of the Community Safety Strategy 2005-2008 and the Community Safety Plan 2008-2011.

ACTION

The Community Safety Plan would come into effect from April 2008 and was the first Plan to be developed under the new system. It was noted that new provisions would require annual strategic assessments to be carried out, which would impact and determine, new community safety priorities each year. Information collated at a local level would play an important part in the evolution and development of the rolling action plan.

The Head of Community Safety confirmed that strategic assessments would take place in the autumn of each year to determine priorities. Community safety priorities for 2008/09 had been identified from the first strategic assessment. The information gathering process for future strategic assessments would involve partner information sharing and community consultation. Members were asked to consider assisting the partnership by identifying community groups or members of the public, who might like to take part in identifying community safety issues to help inform future priorities. The information which had informed the first strategic assessment had been Police focused predominantly.

Councillor D Clark commented on the absence of final statistics and questioned the accuracy of some information, eg, criminal damage, safety targets, the absence of “responsible officers”, resources and time lines. She felt that the report needed further work before the Council took the Strategy forward. The Director of Customer and Community Services commented that it was a partnership document which had been adopted by the Responsible Authorities Group (RAG). The Action Plan had already been accepted by that Group.

The Head of Community Safety commented that the baseline for the data had changed during the lifetime of the Plan which had impacted on the targets and the ability to collate like-for-like information. Gaps within the appendices would be resolved as far as possible.

ACTION

Councillor C Woodard commented on the MIDAS data on hate crime in that there were gaps in the figures for hate crime in 2006/2007 and 2007/2008. Officers undertook to write to Members on this issue.

DNS

Councillor D Clark comment on the importance on youth engagement. She commented on the absence of resources within part 7 (Timeline), and the absence of performance indicators within Appendix C of the report now submitted. The Head of Community Safety assured the Member that information was awaited in relation to Local Area Agreement (LAA) Targets and the report would be updated when this was received. Councillor C Woodward suggested that it was possibly premature to present the report to the Executive as it currently stood.

The Head of Community Safety acknowledged that information was missing and stressed the need to obtain information at a local level from Members and from the community and its partners, in order to produce a “tighter” Action Plan. She commented that the Government had produced guidance and gave the Council a short timeframe to produce an Action Plan. Information was still awaited from partners.

Members received the report and thanked the Officers for their work in producing the report.

RESOLVED – that (A) the Community Safety Strategy 2005-2008 be received subject to final 2007/08 data being available and that the Community Safety Plan 2008-2011 be received as a framework for the Partnership, subject to further clarification on the issues outlined to Officers; and

DNS

(B) Members actively identify ways in which they could contribute to and help the consultation process of the Community Safety Plan 2008-2011 and to liaise with Community Safety Officers.

ACTION652 PROGRESS ON THE PROCUREMENT OF NEW LEISURE CONTRACTS

The Director of Customer and Community Services submitted a report on the progress of the procurement of the new leisure contracts. It was noted that six organisations had indicated interest in bidding for the tender: one for all three Lots: four for Lots 1 and 2 and one for Lot 3 only. In order to improve the likelihood of the tender process delivering optimum outcomes for the Council, a revised project timetable had been established. This was set out in the report now submitted.

The Head of Community and Cultural Services confirmed that there were no plans to curtail leisure provision at Ward Freman Pool.

Councillor D Clark commented that there were no financial implications within the report and that figures should have been provided to cover the October to December period. It was noted that reports elsewhere on the agenda covered this issue.

Members of Community Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

653 JOINT PROVISION WEEKEND CASUAL SWIMMING REVIEW

The Head of Community and Cultural Services submitted a report reviewing swimming and leisure arrangements at Ward Freman, Leventhorpe and Fanshawe Pools. The Head of Community and Cultural Services outlined the current situation at each of the pools.

Councillor S A Bull commented on the need for the contractor to look at the promotion of casual swimming at Ward Freman.

ACTION

Councillor D Clark referred to the opening arrangements of Fanshawe Pool and the subsidy arrangement by Sawbridgeworth Town Council of Leventhrope Pool. She felt that there was no justification in treating the two pools differently and that there was no justification in asking Sawbridgeworth residents to pay twice for the facility. The Head of Community and Cultural Services commented that the decisions regarding provision arrangements had been taken by the Executive in June and September 2007.

Councillor S A Bull commented that Sawbridgeworth Town Council had volunteered to provide the subsidy.

RESOLVED – that the Executive be informed that the Committee supports the retention of the existing weekend swim programmes detailed in the report and Appendix now submitted, subject to ongoing review.

654 LEISURE CENTRE CONTRACT MONITORING

The Director of Customer and Community Services submitted a report updating Members on the monitoring and operation of the leisure management contract. It was noted that a range of indicators set out in the report now submitted, would be negotiated as part of the new leisure contracts procurement process from the start of the new contract. It was anticipated that information on future performance would be substantially improved, as a result of new requirements in relation to data collection.

The Director of Customer and Community Services commented that as a result of the tender process and the closing date of 25 April 2008, the performance management information presented in the report now submitted, had been reviewed to reflect the sensitivity around the disclosure of certain information. Appendix C to the report now submitted set out the indicative financial performance as at the end of February 2008 in relation to income and expenditure returns for that period. Appendix

ACTION

B to the report now submitted set out the specification requirements of the tender to secure continuous improvement.

Councillor D Clark commented that sensitive information could have been included on “pink papers”. She asked whether Officers had taken account of liabilities. The Director commented on the complexity of assessing the financial information. He commented that the provision of graphs would not have added value to the report.

Members of Community Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

655 WORK PROGRAMME 2008/09

The Chief Executive submitted a report outlining the current work programme as a basis for planning future scrutiny work.

The Scrutiny Officer referred to the deadlines in relation to Quarterly Healthchecks, which could result in some changes. The work of the Health Engagement Panel was noted and should Members require its work to continue, then formal support needed to be indicated.

In relation to the Meals on Wheels Service, it was noted that the WVRS had been asked to make a presentation.

Members supported the work programme as a basis for planning future scrutiny work and supported the continuance of the Health Engagement Panel.

RESOLVED – that (A) the report be used as a basis for reviewing the current work programme and planning the future work of Community Scrutiny Committee; and

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(B) the work of the Health Engagement Panel be supported.

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm.

Chairman
Date

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