

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE
WAYTEMORE ROOM, BISHOP'S
STORTFORD, ON TUESDAY,
1 DECEMBER 2009 AT 9.35 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs D L E Hollebbon (Chairman).
Councillors W Ashley, Mrs R F Cheswright,
D Clark, Mrs M H Goldspink, G E Lawrence
(substitute for Councillor G McAndrew),
D A A Peek, N C Poulton.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillor N P Clark.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Cliff Cardoza	- Head of Environmental Services
Dave Cooper	- Performance Officer
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
Peter Mannings	- Democratic Services Assistant
George A Robertson	- Director of Customer and Community Services

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Nick Taylor	- Grant Thornton – External Auditor
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411 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors A L Burlton and G McAndrew. It was noted that Councillor G E Lawrence was in attendance as substitute for Councillor G McAndrew.

412 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed the External Auditor to the

meeting.

The Chairman stated that Alternate Refuse Collection (ARC) had been well received by the public. Officers had received some queries but no adverse comments and the public seemed to be on the Council's side.

The Chairman wished Members and Officers a pleasant festive season.

RESOLVED ITEMS

ACTION

413 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2009 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

414 EAST HERTS COUNCIL TRANSPORT AND PARKING STRATEGY – A NEW WAY FORWARD

The Director of Customer and Community Services submitted a report on the East Herts Council Transport and Parking Strategy - A New Way Forward. He stated that government legislation recently enacted a duty on Hertfordshire County Council as the Transport Authority to revisit transport plans in light of 5 new themes and 22 subsidiary challenges.

The Director emphasised that it was important for the Authority to produce a document for the District that was fully integrated with the wider picture. Officers felt that the Authority should link in with Hertfordshire County Council and prepare a strategy for East Herts in line with the County Council's consultation programme.

Councillor D Clark commented on how this would affect East Herts Council's input into the process. The Director stated that there were considerable advantages to using the new framework and linking in with the County Council's consultation process.

Councillor Mrs M H Goldspink commented on whether a task and finish group would be set up. The Director advised that this would not be required as he would attend meetings of the Countywide Transport Group with the East Herts Parking Manager. Members requested that a feedback report be submitted to the Environment Scrutiny Committee every 6 months.

The Committee received the report.

RESOLVED - that (A) the changed circumstances since East Herts Council began preparation of its Transport and Parking Strategy be noted;

(B) a revised approach and timescale for the preparation of this strategy be supported;

(C) East Herts Council's active involvement in Hertfordshire County Council's preparation of a new Local Transport Plan (LTP3), to reflect changed requirements recently imposed by central government, be supported;

(D) a recommendation to the Executive that East Herts Council should prepare its transport and parking strategy for the District in tandem with HCC's preparation of LTP3, using the same framework and with links to this document where appropriate, be supported; and

(E) Officers submit a progress report to Environment Scrutiny Committee every 6 months.

DCCS

415 2009/10 SERVICE PLANS – SUMMARY OF PROGRESS AND EXCEPTIONS REPORT

The Leader of the Council submitted a report providing a summary of the 2009/10 Service Plan actions relevant to Environment Scrutiny Committee that had been completed, including details of actions that required a revised completion date.

The Chairman stated that, in response to a query on a reference in the report to a customer service note for the conservation service, the Performance Officer had been provided with a copy by the Head of Planning and Building Control.

The Committee was advised that the note was a public document and would soon be available on the internet.

The Committee received the report.

RESOLVED - that (A) the summary of progress against 2009/10 Service Plan actions be received; and

(B) the actions that require revised completion dates be noted.

416 ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY HEALTHCHECK – AUGUST TO SEPTEMBER 2009

The Director of Customer and Community Services submitted an exception report on the performance of the key indicators related to Environment Scrutiny Committee for August to September 2009.

Councillor D Clark commented that EHPI 2.23(188) should be reviewed before attempts were made to limit the number of planning applications reported to the Development Control Committee.

The Director undertook to discuss the issue with the Head of Planning and Building Control. He was unsure at what point Officers would consider target setting. The Performance Officer commented that Officers were currently looking at the performance indicators.

Councillor Mrs M H Goldspink expressed concern in respect of performance against EHPI 2.10(3). She commented that it was very important that building sites were inspected to ensure that plans were adhered to.

Councillor Goldspink sought clarification on whether an Officer had been recruited to replace the agency surveyor. Officers undertook to provide a written response after the meeting. Councillor D Clark expressed concerns that the Committee had no information relating to the service implications of efficiencies involving the loss of vacant posts.

Councillor D Clark commented on when Officers expected that the off target performance against EHPI 2.2 (45) would be recovered. The Head of Environmental Service commented that the roll-out of Alternate Refuse Collections (ARC) had impacted on performance as residents and recycling crews adjusted to the new scheme.

The Committee was reminded that a new collection regime meant that a temporary increase in missed collections was to be expected. Councillor D Clark sought and was given clarification on whether performance would stabilise by March 2010. The Chairman reminded Members that a report on the ARC roll-out would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

Councillor D Clark referred to EHPI 7.0 and queried whether 95% was a sensible target for the percentage of NTO challenges responded to within 10 working days. The Director stated that this was a fair comment as the national standard was 14 to 15 days and the target may have been over ambitious. The Director undertook to discuss the issue with the Parking Manager

Councillor D Clark commented on the need to identify whether the target was the problem or the service involved. She was keen to ensure that Members were involved at an early stage in the target setting process.

Councillor Goldspink referred to NI191 and commented on why there was no current target for residual waste collected per household. The Head of Environmental Services commented that the amount of residual waste per house was not an issue that Officers could directly control. The Committee was advised that with more recycling under

ARC, the figure for residual waste should fall.

Councillor D Clark commented on whether there was an informal target for households. Officers confirmed that there was and that it was expected that performance would get close to that level over the year as a whole. The Head of Environmental Services emphasised that the monthly figures varied so much that a short term view would not be helpful. Members were advised that the cumulative annual figure was a more appropriate measure.

The Committee was advised that Officers hoped that the amount of waste sent to landfill would decrease year on year. Members could be provided with historical data if required, but Officers felt that this would not be useful short term.

The Committee received the report.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

417 REFUSE, RECYCLING AND STREET CLEANSING
CONTRACT DESIGN

The Head of Environmental Services submitted a report to request that a Task and Finish Group be established to consider the service requirements for a new Refuse, Recycling and Street Cleansing Contract.

The Committee was advised that the procurement process for a new contract should start now as the current contract would expire in May 2011. Members were also advised that a lead time of 6 months was required for the procurement of the vehicle fleet, meaning that the contract must be awarded by November 2010.

The Head of Environmental Services requested that a task and finish group be set up to review the contract scope and options for the specification of the draft contract. The Group could then report back to the Committee in March 2010.

Councillor D Clark expressed concerns over the tight timescale for such a large and important contract. She also commented that the costs of the current arrangements should be scrutinised before a new contract was awarded to ensure the Authority secured a value for money approach to delivering this service. Councillor Clark commented on why other Authorities provided a similar service with a significantly lower financial burden.

The Head of Environmental Services commented that it was academic for Officers to compare the costs incurred by East Herts Council to those incurred at other Authorities. The cost was determined by the specification requested and the resulting prices tendered by contractors.

Members were advised that the cost was linked to the range of services listed in the specification and this varied greatly from contract to contract. He emphasised that a good contract was influenced by a sound procurement process and a clear specification of the service required by Members.

Members were advised that Local Authorities often aimed to pitch a contract between the minimum statutory service and one that provided a "Rolls Royce" service. The process of designing a tender for a service contract should deliver value for money.

The Chairman commented that Officers could invite other Authorities to inform the work should the task and finish group so wish. Councillor D Clark stated that the draft scope did not address her concerns. The Head of Environmental Services commented that there would be opportunities to feed into the process and debate the issues via the task and finish group.

Councillors W Ashley, D Clark, Mrs M H Goldspink and N C Poulton expressed their interest in contributing to the work of the task and finish group. The Scrutiny Officer undertook to contact the group leaders to submit nominations for Members to sit on the task and finish

group.

The Committee received the report.

RESOLVED - that (A) a Task and Finish Group be established to undertake the work detailed in the report now submitted; and CE

(B) the Scrutiny Officer invite group leaders to submit nominations of Members to sit on the task and finish group. CE

418 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10 AND 2010/11

The Committee considered items to be included in the work programme for 2009/10 and 2010/11 and approved the programme now submitted. Members agreed that a 6 monthly report be added to the work programme in respect of the draft Local Transport Plan (LTP3).

The Scrutiny Officer reminded Members that there were two Scrutiny workshops taking place in January and February 2010, which provided opportunities to contribute to the Scrutiny process.

The Committee approved the work programme as now submitted.

RESOLVED – that the work programme as now submitted, be approved.

The meeting closed at 10.25 pm

Chairman
Date

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