

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON TUESDAY
13 MARCH 2012, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs D Hollebbon (Chairman)
Councillors D Abbott, W Ashley, E Bedford,
R Beeching, P Gray, C Rowley, M Wood and
J Wyllie

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors P Ballam, E Buckmaster and
P Ruffles

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Cliff Cardoza	- Head of Environmental Services
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
Peter Mannings	- Democratic Services Officer
Andrew Pulham	- Parking Manager
George A Robertson	- Director of Customer and Community Services

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

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692 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of
Councillors S Basra and N Poulton. It was noted that
Councillor E Bedford was substituting for Councillor N
Poulton.

693 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2011 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

694 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman referred to the fact that it was the last meeting of the Civic Year and thanked Committee Members and Officers for their continued support and hard work in respect of Task and Finish Groups and meetings of the Committee.

The Chairman welcomed Councillors P Ballam, E Buckmaster, G McAndrew and P Ruffles to the meeting.

695 EAST HERTS PARKING AND TRANSPORT STRATEGY 2012/2022: REPORT OF THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Chairman of the Parking and Transport Strategy Task and Finish Group submitted a report providing Members with an update in respect of the progress made regarding completion of the Council's Parking and Transport Strategy.

Councillor G McAndrew, as the Chairman of the Task and Finish Group, provided an overview relating to the evolution of the Strategy. He advised that Members had kept in mind the Council's strategic aims and had included a glossary of key terms early on in the strategy document.

Councillor G McAndrew stated that the strategy had taken account of the key differences and community priorities between the towns and rural areas across East Herts. He detailed the areas covered by the chapters contained in the strategy document. Members were reminded of the RING – GO system where by the public could extend parking tickets via a short phone call.

The Committee was advised that the Task and Finish Group would meet a further 2 or 3 times before the Strategy was presented to the Executive for approval in 6 weeks time. The Parking Manager stressed that the work of the Task and Finish Group had highlighted that there were no right or wrong answers and the Strategy would provide a framework for future decision making over at least the next 10 years.

Councillor R Beeching commented that two key concerns from the public perspective were accessibility and commerce. He also stated that economic wellbeing was very important to the towns and villages. In response to a query from Councillor Beeching, Members were advised that the Authority was not permitted to make any profit on parking enforcement.

Members and Officers had a general debate around the methodology and balance of enforcement deployed in East Herts and also in respect of whether the Authority should heavily enforce against illegal on-street parking as opposed to car park enforcement.

The Parking Manager confirmed that Officers had considered whether to suspend the first charging period in car parks and increase the tariff for the subsequent time periods in car parks and stated that a 6 month trial of this methodology was planned for a Sawbridgeworth car park. Members were advised that tear-off refundable tickets were already in use in Bishop's Stortford and this could be used more widely at any time, if a town's traders agreed to set up such a scheme.

The Parking Manager advised that future enforcement would be simplified when the existing pay and display machines came to the end of their useful life and were replaced by newer technology which might be a pay on exit system enforced by Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras. This would enable Officers to support the economy of the high streets by tackling congestion caused by on-street contraventions.

The Parking Manager advised that the budgets agreed for the new contract included the provision of an ANPR vehicle to tackle hot spots in respect of illegal parking which will be particularly important for ensuring safety around schools.

Members had a general debate in respect of bus service provision across East Herts. The Parking Manager commented that opportunities were being explored by the LSP to improve accessibility through a Community Transport approach.

The Director of Customer and Community Services stated that Officers of the LSP were attempting to map transport options across the district. Councillor M Wood suggested that the only reason the two principal bus routes in Bishop's Stortford were still viable was the significant subsidy provided by BAA Stansted as these routes serviced Stansted Airport.

Members were invited to identify any further areas where they needed further information or clarity in respect of the progress that had been achieved to date. Members were asked to ensure this feedback was provided to the Parking Manager by 5 pm on Friday 16 March 2012.

Members received the report.

RESOLVED – that (A) any further feedback be submitted to the Parking Manager by 5 pm on Friday 16 March 2012;

(B) Officers incorporate salient feedback from the Environment Scrutiny Committee into the draft Parking and Transport Strategy document; and

(C) the draft Parking and Transport Strategy document be recommended to the Executive for approval.

PROGRESS

The Head of Environmental Services submitted a report updating the Committee on progress achieved during the first two years of implementation of the East Herts Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan. Members were provided with a detailed background to the report.

The Committee was also reminded that the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan had been produced following meetings of a Task and Finish Group led by the late Councillor D Peek. Members were advised that the actions detailed in the report had been determined by the Task and Finish Group.

Councillor R Beeching referred to the viability of the 15KW wind turbine at Buntingford. He stated that wind turbines had a payback period of 14 years whereas the lifespan of a typical wind turbine was 10 years. Members had a general debate in relation to the use of gray water and carbon filters at Wallfields.

In response to a Member's query regarding the Local Development Framework, the Director of Customer and Community Services advised that he would ask Planning Policy Officers to provide a written response.

Members received the report and agreed to receive a further report in a year's time which would set out the data for carbon and financial savings and the environmental benefits arising from the action plan.

RESOLVED – that the progress achieved in implementing the East Herts Climate Change Action Plan since its adoption by the Council in December 2009, be noted.

697 ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY HEALTH CHECK: SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 2011

The Director of Customer and Community Services

submitted a report on the performance of key indicators relating to Environment Scrutiny Committee during the period September to December 2011, the detail of which was set out in the report now submitted.

The Director referred to EHPI 6.8 – Turnaround of pre Notice to Owner (NTO) Penalty Change Notice (PCN) challenges. He stated that performance had slipped below target following the Christmas holidays and stewarding undertaken by the team in support of Christmas shoppers.

The Director also referred to NI 157a – Processing of planning applications: ‘Major’ applications. He advised that Performance had been ‘Red’ for December 2011 due to the decision making timescale taking longer on three applications as they required the completion of Section 106 legal agreements.

In response to a query from Councillor M Wood, the Head of Environmental Services clarified the criteria whereby a motor vehicle was classified as abandoned.

In response to a further query from Councillor Wood, Members were advised that it was often possible to trace the owners of caravans parked on the highway via the CRiS database. The Committee was advised that all caravans manufactured since 1992 were recorded on the CRiS database via a unique 17 digit Vehicle Identification Number (VIN). This meant that it was a simple task for Officers to identify the owner and clarify whether a caravan was abandoned.

Members received the report.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

698 2012/13 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered items for scrutiny during the civic year 2012/13. The Scrutiny Officer provided an

update on future items for consideration, in particular a report relating to recycling that would be submitted to the June 2012 meeting.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that the Climate Change report would be moved back to the June 2013 meeting to ensure that a full year's worth of data was available for scrutiny by Members.

The Committee approved the Work Programme as amended.

RESOLVED – that the amended work programme be approved.

The meeting closed at 8.10 pm

Chairman
Date