

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON TUESDAY
10 NOVEMBER 2015, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor J Wyllie (Chairman)
Councillors K Brush, K Crofton, H Drake,
M Freeman, T Page and S Reed

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors G McAndrew and P Ruffles

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Democratic Services Officer
Cliff Cardoza	- Head of Environmental Services
Karl Chui	- Performance Monitoring Officer
Simon Drinkwater	- Director of Neighbourhood Services
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
David Thorogood	- Environmental Co-Ordinator
Liz Watts	- Chief Executive

381 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors P Ballam and P Phillips.

382 MINUTES - 8 SEPTEMBER 2015

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 8

September 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

383 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed the new Chief Executive, Liz Watts.

The Chairman drew Members' attention to a replacement Essential Reference Paper "B" in relation to agenda item 9 (Environment Scrutiny Healthcheck).

The Chairman requested that, with Members' consent, the order of the agenda be changed to bring forward the Service Plans and Healthcheck reports. This was supported.

384 2015/16 SERVICE PLANS AND KEY PROJECTS MONITORING

The Director of Finance and Support Services submitted an exception report which provided a mid-year summary of how the Council had performed against its priorities for 2015/16 and on key projects. The report also provided an update on the outstanding service plan actions from 2014/15, 2013/14 and 2011/12. The Performance Monitoring Officer provided a summary of the report.

In response to a query from Councillor K Crofton regarding the resources in place to implement the Castle Weir Hydro Scheme, the Head of Environmental Services explained that the issue was not about resources but reaching agreement with the Environment Agency (EA) on flood issues and their demands for further data modelling exercises to be carried out. The Environmental Strategy and Development Manager provided a summary of the Council's interaction with the Environment Agency adding that comparable schemes in other areas, usually took around five - six years to complete. The Head of Environmental Services explained that the EA's support was needed on the project otherwise the Council would not be able to apply for planning permission and the project would be suspended.

In response to a query from Councillor M Freeman, the Head of Environmental Services explained the difficulties in trying to escalate the scheme, in terms of the EA's turnover of staff and the need to co-ordinate with different sections within the EA which had frustrated efforts to move the scheme on. He explained that the Council had the agreement of the EA on most points and just had to wait a little longer.

The Committee received the report.

RESOLVED – that the reported performance for the period April 2015 to September 2015 be received.

385 ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY HEALTHCHECK JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2015

The Director of Finance and Support Services submitted a report on the performance of key indicators for Environment Scrutiny for the period July 2015 to September 2015.

The Performance Monitoring Officer summarised the report and explained that overall, 8 out of the 15 Environment Scrutiny Committee performance indicators were either on target or exceeding their targets as at September 2015, and one was "Amber". Additionally, in terms of the short term trend, six indicators out of 15 performance indicators had shown an improvement in performance compared to the previous period. One indicator had maintained the same level of performance and seven had declined. One indicator (EHPI 2.1e – Planning Enforcement: Service of Formal Notices) did not have any performance data to analyse as no notices had been served in September 2015. The Performance Monitoring Officer explained that, due to the fact that no clear pattern could be identified in relation to PI EHPI 204 (Planning appeals allowed), this indicator needed to be changed from monthly reporting to quarterly. This was supported

The Committee received the report.

RESOLVED – that (A) the reported performance for the period July 2015 to September 2015 be received; and

(B) Performance Indicator EHPI 204 (Planning appeals allowed) be reported quarterly.

386 CLIMATE CHANGE - REPORT ON PROGRESS

The Executive Member for Environment and Public Space submitted a report detailing the progress achieved in reducing carbon emissions following the first five years of implementing the East Herts Climate Change Action Plan. The Environmental Strategy and Development Manager provided a summary of the report.

Councillor P Brush commented that the report and supporting papers referred back to 2009 and believed that it was time to refresh the document and start over again with new initiatives. The Chairman explained that a Task and Finish Group had been established to provide guidance on setting objectives and that 2009 was taken as the baseline to benchmark actions against.

The Head of Environmental Services explained that the climate change strategy was a long term document with many actions taking longer than a year such as fuel saving measures from new collection vehicles delivered as part of the waste and cleansing services contract, the closure of Bishop's Stortford Offices, etc. and with carbon reduction being achieved over a significant time frame. He stated that many of the actions contained within the document had been successfully completed and if Members wanted to refresh the strategy and action plan this could be done.

In response to a query from Councillor K Crofton regarding carbon emissions and the savings achieved over time, the Environmental Strategy and Development Manager explained that according to the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC), fuel costs were increasing by 2% year on year.

The Committee noted and supported the continued and ongoing progress achieved in implementing the East Herts

Climate Change Action Plan since its initial adoption by the Council in December 2009. Members also supported a suggestion to review, rationalise and refresh the climate change action plan and objectives via a Task and Finish Group.

RESOLVED – that (A) the continued and ongoing progress achieved in implementing the East Herts Climate Change Action Plan, together with the continuing success in the reduction of carbon emissions arising from the Council's service provision, be supported; and

(B) the Climate Change Action Plan be rationalised and its objectives refreshed via a Task and Finish Group.

387 COMMUNITY ENERGY UPDATE

The Executive Member for Environment and Public Space submitted a report on the concept of community energy and of options for encouraging the development of community energy initiatives within the District and working closely with community groups. The Environmental Strategy and Development Manager gave a presentation on the background in relation to community energy initiatives and summarised the report drawing Members' attention to the range of opportunities listed in paragraph 5.0.

Councillor H Drake said that the Council should lead by example and suggested that it should initiate energy measures on the roofs of its own buildings and act as a facilitator in terms of information which could be provided to others. Councillor K Brush supported using the Council's own buildings to promote the initiative, but did not think there was a need to encourage others to do so as he felt that other individuals would take on whatever measures they felt necessary.

Councillor K Crofton explained that the district is on the brink of a massive housing building project and that the Council should be encouraging planners to incorporate viable energy schemes into housing developments over a certain size.

Councillor T Page agreed that there was an opportunity to ensure that renewable energy projects were taken up at the planning stage, but that developers would argue that a housing development scheme would not be financially viable. He sought confirmation that Officers were discussing such matters with regard to the emerging District Plan. Councillor T Page referred to the energy project run by Hertfordshire County Council. The Environmental Strategy and Development Strategy Manager explained that he had had discussions with Officers on the emerging District Plan and that the HCC scheme was a fuel tariff switching scheme, whereas the community energy scheme was about generating power in the community and making carbon savings.

The Committee acknowledged the range of opportunities for supporting the development of community energy initiatives and recommended to the Executive, that:

- the Council should support a scheme of renewable energy in relation to its own estate and to act as a source of publicity, information and advice through appropriate media;
- planning officers be asked to raise the profile to promote community energy in the District Plan; and
- consideration be given to including community energy as a requirement within the District Plan.

RESOLVED – that the Executive be advised that Environment Scrutiny Committee:

(A) supports a scheme of renewable energy in relation to its own estate and to act as a source of publicity, information and advice through appropriate media;

(B) planning officers be asked to raise the profile to promote community energy in the District Plan; and

(C) consideration be given to including community energy as a requirement within the District Plan.

388 ENVIRONMENT WORK PROGRAMME (NOVEMBER 2015)

The Chairman submitted a report setting out the future work programme for Environment Scrutiny Committee for 2015/16.

The Scrutiny Officer asked Members to disregard recommendation “B”. She stated that a report on Fuel Poverty would be presented to Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on 8 December 2015. The Scrutiny Officer stated that the work programme needed to be amended to include a report on shared services in relation to Waste and Street Cleansing. The Head of Environmental Services explained that the timing of the report was not wholly within the control of East Herts. He anticipated that there would be a joint report to both Authorities Executives in March 2016 and there would be an opportunity to scrutinise the report in February 2016.

The Scrutiny Officer reminded Members that other reports would be submitted to Environment Scrutiny Committee as a result of the Climate Change review Task and Finish Group commissioned earlier in the meeting.

The Committee supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that the work programme, as amended, be approved

The meeting closed at 8.25 pm

Chairman
Date