

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE ROOM 27, WALLFIELDS,
HERTFORD ON TUESDAY 7 MARCH 2017,
AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor J Wyllie (Chairman)
Councillors Mrs R Cheswright, K Crofton,
G Cutting, H Drake, M Freeman, R Henson,
M McMullen and S Reed.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors A Alder, G Jones and P Ruffles.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

David Allen	-	Waste Services Manager
Lorraine Blackburn	-	Democratic Services Officer
Fiona Corcoran	-	Scrutiny Officer
Emily Coulter	-	Graduate Management Trainee
Louise Overington	-	Assistant Waste Services Manager
Jess Khanom	-	Head of Operations
David Thorogood	-	Environmental Co- Ordinator
Tess Michaels	-	Legal and Democratic Services Apprentice
Ben Wood	-	Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy

590 APOLOGY

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor P Boylan.

591 MINUTES

Councillor K Crofton referred to Minute 264 (Conservation Area Management Plans – Progress and Problems) and sought an update regarding whether the Head of Planning and Building Control had been given sufficient resources to ensure continued pro-activity to increase the momentum of the exercise. Officers agreed to raise the issue with the Head of Planning and Building Control.

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

592 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman stated that this was the last meeting of Environment Scrutiny Committee following a decision to introduce new scrutiny arrangements for the next civic year.

The Chairman thanked Members and Officers for their support of the scrutiny process and wished them well. Members thanked Councillor J Wyllie for his Chairmanship of the committee and his positive contribution to the role of scrutiny.

593 REDUCING CONTAMINATION AND RECYCLING -
COMMUNICATING WITH RESIDENTS

The Waste Services Manager provided Members with a presentation on the Council's Waste Communication Strategy. He provided an overview of the issues and gave a summary of the statistics for 2015 – 2016; specifically, that the Council had:

- 60,000 residences and 50,000 kerbside collections;

- collected 54,567 tonnes of waste from the kerbside;
- sent 27,965 tonnes of waste to landfill
- collected 3,333 tonnes of paper (from the kerbside);
- processed 14,021 tonnes of compost (recycled compost in 2015 (49.62%) in 2016 this was 51.62%);
- Household waste collect per household was 455.64 kg in 2015 up 13.2% to 468.66 kg in 2016.

The Waste Services Manager provided a number of examples which showed how the Council engaged with residents to promote waste awareness / recycling.

The Waste Services Manager provided responses to questions raised by Councillor R Cheswright including the need to increase the print size on the literature, the inability to recycle plastic pots (from bedding plants), the choice of colour on literature and the need to put stickers on bins so that residents were aware what could be recycled. He explained the difficulties caused as a result of contaminants in recycled items and what steps were taken against residents who refused to observe advice. The Waste Services Manager stressed the need to rinse containers before recycling to minimise problems of contamination.

Councillor H Drake raised the issue of the time taken for large household items to be taken away and that this might be contributing to fly tipping. The Waste Services Manager explained the collection timeframes. Deterrents to fly tipping were debated.

Councillor G Cutting raised the issue of publicity to further promote recycling and suggested the Bishop's Stortford Carnival on 17 June 2017 could provide a suitable venue.

In response to a query from Councillor A Alder on items for recycling, the Waste Service Manager explained that if it could be crushed, it could be recycled. The problems of recycling and engaging with residents in properties such as flats were discussed. The Chairman suggested that recycling arrangements for flats should be discussed at the planning stage. The Waste Services Manager explained the logistics and difficulties faced by large waste collection vehicles in

accessing some locations.

The Chairman, on behalf of Members, thanked the Waste Services Manager for his presentation.

Members received the presentation.

RESOLVED – that the presentation be received.

594 SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT - REPORT OF THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Chairman of the Sustainable Transport Task and Finish Group submitted a report setting out the recommendations of the Group. The Head of Communications Strategy and Policy provided a summary of the review, the methodology and lines of enquiry undertaken. The Chairman, on behalf of Members, thanked the Officers for their help in contributing to the work of the Task and Finish group.

Councillor R Cheswright referred to the limited amount of electric cars available and of their high purchase cost. She supported greater involvement in this form of transport and that this should be encouraged further. Councillor R Cheswright stated that sometimes, there was no alternative for people to use their own vehicles, particularly in areas not supported by good public transport. Councillor H Drake supported this view adding that people did not always have the ability to buy new cars. She stated that some of the suggestions put forward by some members of the public (as detailed within the Essential Reference Paper) would be unfair to road users.

Councillor G Cutting felt that there were some “quick wins” to be had and that the cost of the electric car and its battery were expensive. He referred to the suggestion that diesel cars caused congestion and stated that some diesel cars now were far more efficient than some of the diesels used by old buses currently on the roads.

The Environmental Strategy and Development Manager provided an update on the progress being made in relation to

electric vehicles and their range. He explained that approximately 25% of all journeys were less than two miles. He added that the newest type of diesel engine (Euro 6) were in some cases 95% cleaner than older vehicles. Councillor K Crofton stated that the issue was not just about pollutants and gridlocked roads, but about encouraging bus services to provide a usable service. He commented that this could not be done by East Herts alone and needed the support and input from a countywide perspective.

Councillor H Drake suggested a number of schemes which might incentivise greater bus usage. The Environmental Strategy and Development Manager explained that the Council was particularly targeting schools in Bishop's Stortford, Hertford and Sawbridgeworth to participate in National Clean Air Day, which would be held on 15 June 2017. The initiative this year had the aim of encouraging more sustainable travel to/from school together with promoting an anti-idling campaign, highlighting the risks to health of pollution from vehicle exhausts. Councillor S Reed commented that mini-buses could be deployed on a circulating basis.

The Chairman stated that the Task and Finish Group had considered the use of yellow school buses as used in the USA, but this worked there because of the sheer size of the schools and the number of pupils attending which were widely dispersed.

The Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy stated that charging for roads in East Herts was something the Executive could do but that this needed further thought and debate. Councillor M Freeman commented that the Council could charge for certain roads which were congested and which might help pollution levels.

Members thanked the Officers for the thorough report and supported the recommendations, as detailed.

RESOLVED - that the Executive be asked to:

- (A) in partnership with Hertfordshire Highways, consider the cost and benefits of a charging mechanism for use of the road infrastructure, targeting certain types of vehicles (e.g. HGVs) or journeys taking place at certain times of the day (e.g. during rush hour);
- (B) consider a charge for use of the car park at the East Herts Council offices, alongside an incentive scheme for those who car share or use lower emissions vehicles;
- (C) invest in a fixed term role within the Council to actively promote sustainable transport platforms and campaigns within the District, supported by a Member champion;
- (D) as part of that person's work programme, assist in the roll out of the park and stride model to schools in Hertford, Ware, Buntingford and Bishop's Stortford;
- (E) undertake further consultation with members of the public (building on responses already received) about what specific improvements to the current cycling and walking networks would encourage more journeys (e.g. electric charging points, cycling lanes, track improvements, etc);
- (F) support the relevant landowners with investments to enable minor changes to the cycle networks to encourage use;
- (G) promote cycling and walking networks in conjunction with the County Council and pro-actively market the bike and go scheme in Bishop's Stortford;
- (H) ensure volunteering opportunities to maintain and improve cycling and walking routes are considered with East Herts Council's volunteering policy;
- (I) continue to encourage uptake of CVS community transport options;

(J) consider commissioning the University of Hertfordshire's Smart Mobility Research Unit to look at mobility as a service business model for East Herts, viable on demand business models and driverless technology;

(K) support the marketing and promotion of the Intalink mobile app to rural communities in East Herts;

(L) work in partnership with strategic bodies such as the County Council, LEP and LSCC to lobby the Department for Transport for an East/ West light rail route;

(M) work in partnership with strategic bodies such as the County Council, LEP and LSCC for commuters to "think train" as well as lobby train service providers to "think customer";

(N) ensure that, through the District Plan, travel planning and sustainable transport is an early consideration for any new development; and

(O) the council continues to make further provision for electric car parking and charging points within its car parks and uses the recently awarded DEFRA monies to begin a step change in the Council's approach to supporting use of electric cars.

595 ENVIRONMENT WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18

The Chairman of Environment Scrutiny Committee submitted a report on the proposed future work programme in the context of changes to the scrutiny committee system which had been approved by Council on 1 March 2017. The Scrutiny Officer asked Members to submit any draft proposals for consideration to be submitted to her by the end of March 2017.

Councillor R Cheswright asked that meetings of scrutiny be

conducted in the Council Chamber. She stated that the lights in Room 27 were too bright, that the room was hot and cramped and that the acoustics in the room and noise from the projector made things difficult to hear. The Chairman explained the background to the use of Room 27 and agreed that the acoustics were poor.

Councillor M Freeman raised the issue of planning enforcement and the management of breaches. He asked that the Head of Planning and Building Control write to all Members with an update on this. This was supported.

The Committee supported the recommendations, as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that (A) the current work programme for Environment Scrutiny Committee be included in the Scrutiny Committee work plans under the new system; and

(B) the Head of Planning and Building Control be asked to provide Members with an update in relation to planning enforcement and the management of breaches.

The meeting closed at 8.21 pm

Chairman
Date