

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 26 JUNE 2012

REPORT BY CHAIRMAN OF ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY

SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

WARD(S) AFFECTED: *none*

Purpose/Summary of Report

- To review and determine Environment Scrutiny Committee's future work programme

<u>RECOMMENDATION FOR DECISION:</u>	
(A)	the work programme shown in this report be agreed

1.0 Background

1.1 Items previously required, identified or suggested for the Environment Scrutiny work programme are set out in **Essential Reference Paper B**.

2.0 Report

2.1 An article explaining the role of scrutiny and inviting suggestions from residents was published in the spring 2012 'council tax' edition of LINK magazine. No new topics for scrutiny have been received from the public to date.

2.2 New suggestions for Environment Scrutiny arising from the Members' scrutiny planning workshop and from the feedback/consultation paperwork are listed below. Members of Environment Scrutiny committee are invited to consider the topics and indicate whether they wish to confirm them as part of the 2012/13 work programme and suggest a preferred date (subject to availability of any relevant officer/speaker).

2.3 Table of topics

Topic/issue	Why/outcome	Priority/comment
Grounds Maintenance 5 year contract review – for Env Scrutiny (Place)	Member input in line with other recent contract renewal (Refuse, Recycling & Street Cleaning). Need to work with interested parties: Highways and Riversmead RSL	High - as time critical (in respect of decision making time line). Requested by HoS – T&F group for autumn 2012 start and report to final meeting of 2012/13.
Review of our Environmental Crime policies – for Env Scrutiny - and possibly Comm Scrutiny if a joint review undertaken. (Place/People)	Significant changes to legislation. Need to look at links between Env Crime (Env) and ASB (Community Safety) when Act is passed	High – but later in year and only when legislation/guidelines are finalised and clear (T&F group late 2012/13 possibly running into 2013/14)
Topics raised at planning session		
Member interest in: Impact of the abolition of the local JMP and review of the success/failure of any new arrangements (for Env Scrutiny)	Concern that localised/fragmented funding will not address broader problems. Loss of arrangements for presenting petitions.	Details of new arrangements not yet settled. Would have to allow some time for these to run to evaluate evidence of impact.
Member interest in: Listed Buildings and Conservation (for Env Scrutiny)	Maintaining historic buildings and character of our district in light of economic pressures, and available resources. Localism – feeling from parish/town councils that their views are not really considered	There has not been a recent report on this topic to Env Scrutiny (for at least 5 years)
Member interest in: Mobile phone coverage in rural areas	Concern raised re community safety and emergency service calls.	What influence does East Herts have? Balance against community response

	Also problems running small/rural businesses and residents unable to access some on-line banking services at banks that require use of a transaction code sent by text.	to additional phone masts. NOTE: mobile operators briefing pre Development Control Committee already scheduled for 9 Jan 2013 (tbc)
Member interest in: Future of our chalk streams and rivers	Concern about the negative impact that environmental pressures (drought and abstraction) are having on this habitat in the district	What influence does East Herts have? Streams and rivers are no respecters of local authority boundaries – who could we work with to address this issue?
Member general (wide) interest in: Littering Litter picking Street cleansing Gully emptying Graffiti Fly posting Waste ground	Concern about visual impact and environmental standards being maintained/slipping. Want to know extent of devolving activity down to local level.	This does link to Environmental Crime policy review raised at the top of the table. However there seems to be some lack of understanding re law, statutory responsibility and legal constraints. Suggest an initial 'training session' to raise awareness - (Sept 2012).

3.0 Implications/Consultations

3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers: none

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