

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

PRESENT: Councillor D Abbott (Chairman)
Councillors W Ashley, S Basra, R Beeching,
E Buckmaster, C Rowley and B Wrangles

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors D Andrews, P Ruffles and M
Pope

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Democratic Services Officer
Cliff Cardoza	- Head of Environmental Services
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
George A Robertson	- Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services
Ian Sharratt	- Environmental Manager

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Tim Wood - Marksman Consulting

287 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors P
Gray, N Poulton and J Wyllie.

288 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

289 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reminded Members to sign the Attendance List which was being circulated.

The Chairman referred to the Grounds Maintenance Contract Task and Finish Group which needed one further Member, owing to a Member's absence through illness.

The Chairman, on behalf of Members, asked that Members' good wishes be forwarded to Councillor N Poulton for a speedy recovery.

An update was provided following the Chairman's visit to Stansted Airport. He also stated that a watercourse adjacent to the castle in Bishop's Stortford were now running and that wildlife was returning.

290 GREEN DEAL - PRESENTATION

The Chairman welcomed Dr Tim Wood of Marksman Consulting to the meeting.

The Environment Strategy and Development Manager provided an outline of the "Green Deal" and explained the role of partners in moving the "Green Deal" forward and possibly working in partnership with Marksman Consulting. The role of Marksman Consulting was explained. Core to the initiative, was the Government's vision that Local Authorities be involved in the "Green Deal" as an example of localism to empower councils to take the initiative and in order to optimise the needs of local communities and businesses. The environmental challenges and the societal impact of fuel poverty were explained and how the "Green Deal" could contribute to economic growth.

Dr Wood explained the financial implications of the “Green Deal” and the benefits of the initiative as countries were under increasing governmental pressure to be carbon neutral.

In response to a query from Councillor E Buckmaster, Dr Wood confirmed that the “Green Deal” was non-profit making and clarified its role and the Council’s role in the process of furthering the initiative. Councillor Buckmaster expressed the need to ensure safeguards were in place to prevent exploitation of vulnerable households.

In response to a query from Councillor R Beeching regarding the initiative “making money”, Dr Wood confirmed that the initiative was about “creating value” in that energy costs and consumption costs would be reduced. He confirmed that “Green Deal” could “make money” from the view point that skills and innovation could be exported.

In response to a query from Councillor D Abbott, Dr Wood confirmed that funding could be raised against any housing stock held by a council to further the initiative. He confirmed that it would be difficult to apply the “Green Deal” to properties which were in part ownership and part tenanted. It was noted that social landlords had expressed an interest in the “Green Deal”.

The Chairman, on behalf of Members, thanked Dr Wood for his presentation.

RESOLVED – that the presentation be received.

291 BACKGROUND BRIEFING PRESENTATION ON GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT

The Head of Environmental Services explained that the Grounds Maintenance Contract was due for review and to this end, a Task and Finish group had been created as part of the review process. He explained the background to the presentation, including the content of the current contract, the need to consider future objectives and standards before any decisions could be taken regarding the renewal or retendering

of the contract which was due to expire in December 2013.

The Parks and Open Spaces Manager explained what the contract did and did not include. It was noted that the Task and Finish Group would report back to Members on 13 November 2012.

In response to a query from Councillor E Buckmaster concerning value for money, the Head of Environmental Services confirmed that the contract included a price escalation clause which was aligned to the retail price index.

In response to a query from Councillor B Wrangles, the Parks and Open Spaces Manager confirmed the roles of both the Council and Hertfordshire County Council in relation to the maintenance of shrubs and grass verges clarifying that "A" roads and the B1000 were not included within the Grounds Maintenance Contract. The condition of the grass verges by Tesco's prior to the Olympic Torch relay through East Hertfordshire, was raised as part of a wider discussion concerning the confusion over who owned particular pieces of land, who was responsible for them and who had the authority or contract to maintain them.

In response to a query from Councillor R Beeching regarding working with South Anglia on the maintenance of grounds they owned in Sawbridgeworth, the Head of Environmental Services confirmed that the Housing Association had been initially approached on this matter before the original contract was allocated, but chose to make their own wider regional arrangements. He confirmed that he had recently written to both housing associations to see if they wished to reconsider their current arrangements. The Head of Environmental Services confirmed the Council's position in relation to sponsored roundabouts.

The Chairman reminded Members that the Task and Finish Group was one Member short and asked Members to contact the Scrutiny Officer if they would be willing to participate in the review.

Members received the presentation.

RESOLVED – that the presentation be received.

292 ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY HEALTH CHECK APRIL - JUNE 2012

The Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services submitted a report on the performance of key indicators relating to Environment Scrutiny Committee for the period April to June 2012.

In response to a query from Councillor R Beeching concerning NI 157b (Processing of Planning applications: Minor) the Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services said that he would provide a written response to the Member regarding an update in relation to the seven decisions which took longer than the target timescale which had not been explained in the report.

Members noted the report.

RESOLVED – that the report showing performance for the period April to June 2012 be received.

293 WORK PROGRAMME 2012/13

The Chairman submitted a report setting out the Committee's future work programme for 2012/13, the detail of which was set out in Essential Reference Paper "B" of the report now submitted. It was noted that two separate reports in relation to Parking Enforcement guidelines would be submitted in November 2012 and that the Parks and Open Space Strategy report would be delayed and now included on the work programme for February 2013.

Members supported these amendments.

RESOLVED – that the work programmed, as amended, be agreed

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm

Chairman

Date