

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY 2 JULY 2013, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor D Andrews (Chairman).
Councillors E Bedford, S Bull, J Mayes,
M Pope, J Ranger, R Sharma, G Williamson
and J Wing.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors M Carver, P Phillips and
S Rutland-Barsby.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Simon Drinkwater	- Director of Neighbourhood Services
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
Peter Mannings	- Democratic Services Officer
Andrew Pulham	- Parking Manager
Paul Pullin	- Manager of Economic Development
Neil Sloper	- Head of Information, Customer and Parking Services
Adele Taylor	- Director of Finance and Support Services

87 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of
Councillors G Jones and T Page. It was noted that
Councillor S Bull was in attendance as substitute for

Councillor T Page.

88 MINUTES – 28 MAY 2013

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 May 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

89 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reminded the Committee that Members that had attended the recent governance training should return the sign-off form on the back page to the Scrutiny Officer as soon as possible.

90 EMPLOYMENT LAND REVIEW 2013

The Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport submitted a report that introduced the Employment Land Review 2013, which had updated the previous review undertaken by Halcrow in 2008. The report also proposed that Officers of the Council explore the viability and feasibility of resourcing the key recommendations detailed in the report.

Members were advised that, following a decision by the Executive to identify priority funding for the Council's Prosperity theme, a temporary Officer had been recruited to report on the stock of employment land in East Herts. The subsequent report had identified areas and projects that might be appropriate for Council investment.

Members were advised that, since the 2008 Halcrow Report, the amount of employment land lost to other uses had been minimal. Members were also advised that the suggested way forward was that the Authority consider undertaking a targeted and proactive programme of interventions designed to raise the quality of existing employment areas.

The Council would, for example, work with landowners,

Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and Hertfordshire Highways to improve access to and signage for the Raynham Road Estate in Bishop's Stortford, to take advantage of its location close to Junction 8 of the M11 and Stansted Airport.

The Council might also consider work with landowners, HCC and other agencies to overcome the current access constraints on further development at Mead Lane and bring forward brownfield land for development in accordance with the Draft Mead Lane Urban Design Framework.

The Council might also continue to pursue the provision of a vehicular link between the Foxholes Estate and Caxton Hill as a first stage in restructuring uses at Caxton Hill, Hertford.

In response to a query from Councillor G Williamson regarding the next steps, Members were advised that a report would ultimately be submitted to the Executive for a full discussion regarding the sites where resources could be considered in support of the Council's Corporate Priority in respect of Prosperity. The Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport advised that large capital sums might be required to ensure that certain key employment sites in East Herts worked to their full potential.

Councillor S Bull expressed concerns that there was a need for new employment areas in Buntingford. The Executive Member stated that the former Sainsbury's depot in Buntingford had previously been intended for an entirely commercial use but this had now fallen through. The likely future use of the site could not solely be residential and a mix of commercial and industrial use had to be the way forward.

Councillor E Bedford commented that the busy industrial site at Marsh Lane in Ware needed tidying up and, in particular, improved signage was needed at the entrance

to this site. He stated that a more thoughtful approach to this site was needed without a significant impact in terms of the capital required.

The Economic Development Manager advised that this was an accurate description of the issues common to industrial estates across the District and was precisely the kind of low cost deliverable improvement the report was referring to in terms of opportunities for environmental enhancements.

Councillor J Ranger commented that capital should be invested in signage, particularly in town and rural employment/industrial sites to encourage employment opportunities. He also referred to the possibility of a survey of rural employment areas in East Herts.

The Economic Development Manager advised that a serious consideration of resources, and not just costs, would need to be made to the Executive.

The Committee received the report.

RESOLVED – that (A) the following actions from the Employment Land Review 2013 be supported:

- The Council should undertake a targeted and proactive programme of interventions designed to raise the quality of existing employment areas by working with tenants and landowners to improve signage and environmental conditions;
- the Council should work with landowners, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and Hertfordshire Highways to improve access to and signage for the Raynham Road Estate in Bishop's Stortford, to take advantage of its location close to Junction 8 of the M11 and Stansted Airport;

- the Council should work with landowners, HCC and other agencies to overcome the current access constraints on further development at Mead Lane, Hertford and bring forward brownfield land for development in accordance with the Draft Mead Lane Urban Design Framework;
- the Council should continue to pursue the provision of a vehicular link between the Foxholes Estate and Caxton Hill as a first stage in restructuring uses at Caxton Hill, Hertford; and
- the Council should undertake a separate review of all rural employment land;

(B) the Economic Development Manager identify the resources required to achieve the outcomes detailed in the Employment Land Review 2013 with a priority on signage and the rural review; and

(C) the Executive be advised to consider the resources required to achieve the outcomes detailed in the Employment Land Review 2013 where a sustainable and manageable outcome is indicated by the detailed business case.

91 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman submitted a report setting out the Committee's future work programme for 2013/14, the detail of which had been set out in Essential Reference Paper 'B' to the report now submitted.

The Scrutiny Officer referred Members to two additional Essential Reference Papers that reflected information requested by Members at the May 2013 meeting of the Committee. These related to a list of East Herts Assets and also details in respect of current activity that supported Economic Development in East Herts.

The Committee was invited to approve two Members to contribute to a working group to work with Officers in reviewing the performance indicators relevant to Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor G Williamson indicated that he would be happy to contribute to the activities of the working group. The Chairman stated that, if no other Members from this Committee volunteered alongside Councillor G Williamson, he would also assist the working group.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that the findings of the Performance Indicator working group would be reported to all three Scrutiny Committees in November 2013 and a final report would be submitted to a joint meeting of Scrutiny Committees in 2014.

Councillor J Ranger commented that if the Committee decided to undertake any review relating to assets or economic development activity, then there should be a clear indication of exactly what the Committee would scrutinise, otherwise the brief would be too broad for effective scrutiny.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that, provided Members were content, an additional report in respect of the revised Risk Management Strategy would be added to the work programme for the August 2013 meeting. Members were advised that Scrutiny was constitutionally obliged to consider this report before it was submitted to Audit Committee and the Executive.

The Committee approved the 2013/14 work programme, as amended.

RESOLVED – that (A) the work programme, as now amended, be approved.

(B) the two Members of the Committee who had indicated an interest in the Performance Indicator

working group, be approved.

92 DATA PROTECTION AND INFORMATION SECURITY UPDATE

The Head of Information, Customer and Parking Services submitted a report updating the Committee on the implementation of the Council's Data Protection Action Plan. Members were invited to comment on progress to date and to identify any additional actions that might be taken to progress the Council's data protection compliance programme.

Members were advised that Essential Reference Paper 'C' set out the current process flow chart in respect of the Data Protection Implementation Project. The flow chart included blocks of key actions that would take place as the project neared completion. Members were also referred to Essential Reference Paper 'B' where the Council's policy framework in respect of information security was set out in priority order.

In response to a query regarding flash memory drives, the Head of Head of Information, Customer and Parking Services stated that the use of these drives was permitted provided that the drives were encrypted. Members were advised however, that the use of such drives was discouraged as the Council's thin client systems meant that flash drives should not be required.

In response to a query from Councillor J Ranger, Members were advised that guidance from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) stated that all Councillors and Officers were personally liable in respect of data protection and information security. The Head of Information, Customer and Parking Services stated that Members should register as data controllers based on the latest ICO guidance.

In response to a number of Members' concerns, the Head of Information, Customer and Parking Services advised

that Members could receive correspondence from residents that contained sensitive information and Members should be aware of their responsibilities in terms of retaining this information or disposing of it securely once a query was resolved.

The Committee received the report and did not identify any additional necessary actions.

RESOLVED – that the implementation of the Council's Data Protection Action Plan be supported.

93 REVIEW OF COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS APRIL 2012 TO MARCH 2013

The Head of Information, Parking and Customer Services submitted a report that summarised the comments, compliments and complaints that had been received between April 2012 and March 2013. The report also highlighted the key issues, remedial action and learning that had arisen during this period.

Members were advised that the Authority fielded approximately half a million phone calls annually and there were, on average, about 85 separate complaints received each year.

The Head of Information, Customer and Parking Services stated that the volume of complaints had increased slightly from the 2012/13 civic year. There was however, evidence that the Authority was performing well as the number of complaints upheld beyond stage 1 was very low.

Members were advised that the large number of compliments recorded reflected the use of the 3Cs system by Building Control to record their post visit survey results, where 57 compliments had been logged. The Housing Team had also logged a number of compliments from clients. The Head of Information, Customer and

Parking Services stated that all teams should be encouraged to actively log any compliments that were received.

The Head of Information, Customer and Parking Services stated that the volume of complaints received by e-mail had increased significantly and this was a sign of the times as e-mail was increasingly accepted as submitting a query or complaint in writing.

Members were referred to Essential Reference Paper 'C' for the corrective actions taken by the Authority in response to complaints. The data was presented in terms of the percentage of complaints that were addressed by each method of corrective action.

Councillor J Ranger complimented Officers for their diligence in dealing with complaints in a timely manner and apologising where necessary to customers. He also highlighted the importance of ongoing Officer training.

The Director of Finance and Support Services stated that, due to the recent welfare reforms in this financial year, there had been an increase in correspondence within Internal Services and the next quarterly report may show a corresponding increase in comments, compliments and complaints. The Head of Information, Customer and Parking Services emphasised that an increase in correspondence was likely in the Autumn due to the planned changes to recycling in the District.

The Committee received the report.

RESOLVED – that the actions detailed in the report be supported.

The meeting closed at 8.35 pm