

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HEALTH AND WELLBEING PANEL HELD
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON TUESDAY
15 OCTOBER 2013, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: E Buckmaster (Chairman)
Councillors P Ballam, R Beeching, S Bull and
A Warman

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors L Haysey

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Democratic Services Officer
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
George A Robertson	- Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services
Paul Thomas-Jones	- Environmental Health Manager
Sheila Winterburn	- Environmental Health Manager - Housing

9 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from the Chairman, Councillor N Symonds. It was noted that Councillor A Warman was substituting for her. In the Chairman's absence, it was noted that the Vice-Chairman, Councillor E Buckmaster, would be chairing the meeting.

10 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

11 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor E Buckmaster commented that the Food Hygiene and Houses in Multiple Occupation report had been included on the agenda as a result of a direct request from Members at the planning meeting noted in the last paragraph of the minutes of the previous meeting.

It was noted that a Staff Wellbeing Day had been arranged for 17 October 2013 when a number of initiatives would be available to encourage wellbeing and monitor levels of fitness.

12 PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUES ARISING OUT OF FOOD HYGIENE INSPECTIONS AND HOUSING IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION

The Executive Members of Health, Housing and Community Support and Community Safety and Environment submitted a joint report on the public health issues arising out of food hygiene inspections and housing in multiple occupation, the detail of which was set out in the report now submitted.

A presentation was provided in two parts, initially a summary of public health issues associated with food hygiene, which included:

- the operations covered by food hygiene law;
- a breakdown of food businesses;
- the enforcement of food hygiene legislation (officer support) including frequency of inspections; and
- turnover of food businesses.

In response to a number of queries from Members regarding public health issues associated with public houses, individuals running mobile burger vans and market traders, the Environmental Health Manager (Commercial) explained how

each of these were categorised in terms of legislation.

In response to a query from Councillor P Ballam regarding changes of use of premises, the Environmental Health Manager (Commercial) explained that premises' owners had to register a change of use 28 days before the change. These were then prioritised for inspection depending on their change of use.

In response to a query from the Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support regarding the biggest area of non-compliance in terms of public health, the Environmental Health Manager (Commercial) explained that all food businesses needed to have a Food Safety Management System in place and that it was usually non-compliance with that requirement which resulted in non-compliance. Officers have also noted deteriorating standards associated with food preparation as the next main area of non-compliance.

In response to a query from Councillor R Beeching regarding initiatives provided by Women's Institutes (WIs) the Environmental Health Manager (Commercial) explained that usually WI leaders audited many of the premises used but that on an ad hoc basis, they did not need to be registered. He reminded Members that those selling food by the roadside had a duty to provide food which was safe.

In the second part of the presentation, the Environmental Health Manager (Residential) provided an overview of Housing in Multiple Occupation covering:

- a definition of what constituted a house in multiple occupation;
- statistics for 2012-13 (of the 2321 requests for environmental help, 193 were about housing, 99 concerned damp and mould and 12 were about 11 HMOs);
- licensed HMOs (of the estimated 185 HMOs, 55 were estimated to be licensable and that 36 were licensed); and
- a summary of current issues which could impact on the

administration and ongoing support for HMOs.

In response to a query from Councillor E Buckmaster regarding the Council's standing in terms of the number of houses in multiple occupation, the Environmental Health Manager (Residential) explained that this was usually affected by whether a town had a university as this would increase HMO demand. She explained that Bishop's Stortford was affected because of its proximity to Stansted Airport.

In response to a query from Councillor P Moore regarding HMOs which needed to be licensed but were not, the Environmental Health Manager (Residential) explained how the licence process worked and the fine which could be imposed for any subsequent failure.

In response to a query from Councillor E Buckmaster regarding what Council databases could be used to establish HMOs, the Environmental Health Manager (Residential) explained the legislative powers which enabled the Council to access certain databases such as those relating to Council Tax and Electoral Registration to establish HMOs.

In conclusion, the Environmental Health Manager (Residential) provided a summary of current issues which would have an impact on Environmental Health from the viewpoint of monitoring and enforcing Houses in Multiple Occupation.

The Panel accepted there were no public health issues arising from Food Hygiene inspections and houses in Multiple Occupation which currently needed detailed member scrutiny and received the report.

RESOLVED – that (A) the inspection teams be thanked for their work on behalf of East Herts residents; and

(B) the Council continue to support the work outlined in the report now submitted, in order to ensure that the present high standards continue to be achieved.

13 WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman of the Health and Wellbeing Panel submitted a report setting out the proposed future work programme of the Panel. Members were reminded that Hertfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board had confirmed that Councillor Colette Wyatt-Lowe would be attending the next Panel meeting on 10 December 2013. The Chairman asked Members to consider what issues were of concern to them which could form the basis of questions to Councillor Wyatt-Lowe and that these should be forwarded to the Scrutiny Officer by 15 November 2013.

Councillor R Beeching suggested that communication channels and feedback between Districts and Borough councils and the Health and Wellbeing Board should be an issue for consideration and discussion together with clarification of the role of the District and Borough representatives. The Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support stated that she would be meeting Terry Heritage from Hertfordshire County Council shortly and would discuss the issue of two way communication.

The Scrutiny Officer agreed to circulate a list of the priority areas within the Hertfordshire Public Health Strategic Plan which could assist Members in raising issues of concern and as an aide in forming questions for the HWB Board representative.

The Chairman referred to East Herts' own Public Health Action Plan report and how this could be better presented to Members in future. Given its size, it was suggested that Officers should in future prepare headlines and exception reports for Members which would provide a more manageable focus. This was supported.

RESOLVED – that the work programme, as now submitted, be approved.

14 HERTFORDSHIRE HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:
REPORT BACK AND KEY REVIEWS

The Chairman of the Health and Wellbeing Panel submitted a report on the ongoing work of Hertfordshire Health Scrutiny Committee (HSC). The report, the detail of which was set out in the report now submitted, also summarised the findings of the local review on recommendations arising from the Francis Report which had been sent to all Districts and Borough Councils on 19 August 2013 for comment. The Chairman referred to the recommendations adding that many of them concerned communication, co-ordination issues and questions over the roles and functions of specific bodies.

The Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services suggested that Members might specifically consider recommendations 23 and 24.

Concerns were expressed regarding recommendation 20 (expanding the minutes). It was felt that this would make matters too complicated and burdensome.

Councillor R Beeching expressed concern regarding recommendation 10 and the operation and function of the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

The Panel supported a suggestion that Hertfordshire County Council be advised of the above mentioned concerns.

RESOLVED – that (A) the report be welcomed, and specifically, recommendations 23 and 24 as set out in Essential Reference Paper “B” of the report be endorsed;

(B) concern be expressed regarding recommendation 20 and the fact this would make matters too complicated and burdensome; and

(C) concern be expressed regarding the CQC and its fitness for purpose.

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm

Chairman

Date