

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON TUESDAY
19 NOVEMBER 2013, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs D Hollebon (Chairman).
Councillors R Beeching, S Bull, J Jones,
J Mayes, P Moore, N Symonds, M Wood and
C Woodward.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors D Andrews, L Haysey, P Ruffles
and S Rutland-Barsby.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Claire Bennett	- Manager of Housing Services
Karl Chui	- Performance Monitoring Officer
Simon Drinkwater	- Director of Neighbourhood Services
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
Peter Mannings	- Democratic Services Officer
Will O'Neill	- Head of Communications, Engagement and Cultural Services
Claire Pullen	- Engagement and Partnerships Officer (Grants)
Mekhola Ray	- Community Projects Team Manager

357 APOLOGY

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Mrs D Hone.

358 MINUTES – 24 SEPTEMBER 2013

The Chairman advised that the Head of Community Safety and Health Services had written to the Chief Constable of Hertfordshire Constabulary in respect of an update on short and medium term plans for the deployment of neighbourhood teams and PCSOs in East Herts as well as the Constabulary's definition of what constituted a "neighbourhood". Officers were still awaiting a response to this enquiry.

In respect of Minute 250 – Police and Crime Commissioner – Guest Presentation, the Committee agreed that the reference to the Police Chief Superintendent in the 5th paragraph should be amended to read Police Chief Constable.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2013, as now amended, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

359 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Jonathan Aves of the Hertfordshire Community Foundation to the meeting.

360 HEALTH ENGAGEMENT PANEL

Councillor N Symonds, the Chairman of the Health and Wellbeing Panel, stated that Councillor E Buckmaster had chaired the 15 October 2013 meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Panel. She provided a verbal update on the recent work of the Panel and advised Members that she had been a member of a Hertfordshire scrutiny group which had visited the Hertfordshire Ambulance Service

call centre.

Councillor Symonds stated that it was clear that a lot of people were calling 999 when they did not need to do so. She had also been on a very interesting and worthwhile visit to Watford General Hospital Accident and Emergency as part of the County scrutiny review of the East of England Ambulance Service.

RESOLVED – that (A) the verbal update be received; and

(B) the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2013 be noted.

361 UPDATE ON COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAMME

The Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support submitted a report that reviewed grant allocations and achievements for the period 1 April to 30 September 2013.

Members were reminded that community grants were designed to take forward the Council's people, place and prosperity objectives. The grants also helped support the East Herts Sustainable Community Strategy and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Members were referred to paragraphs 1.5 and 1.6 of the report for a budget update for 2013/14. Paragraph 2.1 demonstrated a success rate of 91% in respect of applications for capital and revenue grants.

Members were given a detailed breakdown of activity in all funding areas from small community to large capital grants, as well as community engagement activity. Officers indicated that applicants were strongly encouraged to become affiliated to 'lead bodies' for advice and additional support.

Members commented on the importance of East Herts

Sports Clubs co-ordinating with the work of the Community Sports Network. Councillor N Symonds praised the work of the Broxbourne and East Herts Community Voluntary Service (CVS).

The Committee was then reminded of the East Herts Fund for the Future set up by a former Councillor, the late Derek Mayes.

Jonathan Aves, Director of the Hertfordshire Community Foundation (HCF), gave a presentation in respect of the East Herts Fund for the Future. The presentation included a background of the work of the Hertfordshire Community Foundation and also the issue of old 'dormant' funds which could be revived for current use.

Councillor R Beeching commented on the work of very local community charities in East Herts and explored how the East Herts Fund for the Future could be of assistance. Several questions were raised regarding the legal and audit framework of the HCF and how East Herts Council might consider the opportunity to develop the East Herts Fund for the Future and provide a more sustainable legacy for local residents.

The Committee received the report and thanked the Grants Officer and Administrator for their hard work over the past year.

RESOLVED – that (A) the progress being made to allocate grants according to agreed policies and areas of interest for grant support, as detailed in Essential Reference Paper 'B', be noted;

(B) the implications of closer Member involvement with the East Herts Fund for the Future be explored to ensure the legacy continues to operate for the greater benefit of residents in East Herts; and

(C) Officers explore the legal, financial and audit

implications of closer involvement with the East Herts Fund for the Future.

362 COMMUNITY SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman submitted a report setting out the future work programme for Community Scrutiny Committee for 2013/14 to 2014/15, the detail of which had been set out in Essential Reference Paper “B”.

The Committee approved the work programme as now detailed.

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

363 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ADOPTED EAST HERTS HOUSING REGISTER POLICY

The Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support submitted a report advising Members that all Local Authorities which exercised a housing function must publish a Housing Register and Allocations Policy which detailed how homes would be allocated to applicants and prescribed certain categories of people who were to be given ‘reasonable preference’ on the Housing Register.

The Housing Services Manager advised that the current Housing Register and Allocations Policy had been adopted by the Council in April 2013 and implemented from 1st May 2013 for all new applicants wishing to join the Council’s Housing Register and be considered for an allocation of affordable housing in East Herts.

The Executive meeting of 5 March 2013 had recommended adoption of the revised Housing Register and Allocations Policy, so long as there was an impact review undertaken within 6 months, with a full review of the policy being submitted to Community Scrutiny Committee after a year.

Members were advised that, since 1 May 2013, the Housing Options Service had advertised and allocated 127 general needs, un-adapted properties for rent through Choice Based Lettings. Of these properties, 13 had met the criteria for being advertised with a village connection priority and one had no bids over 100 points and two had the top ranked applicants as having a connection to the village, so in these three cases the policy was not applicable.

Members agreed that the small number of cases so far did not give enough evidence to suggest any change to this aspect of the policy at this time.

Members were also advised that the housing associations were keen to ensure that not all of their residents were on housing benefits to assist with the payment of rent. It was therefore recommended that the household salary bar of £48,000 should not be amended at this time because of the introduction of affordable rents and in the interest of balancing communities.

The Housing Services Manager reminded Members that the figure would be subject to annual review, so that the annual average income levels for East Herts residents could be assessed again at the appropriate time.

The Committee received the report.

RESOLVED – that (A) the outcome of the review be received; and

(B) the salary threshold for qualification to the Housing Register be held at £48,000 and the Village Connection Policy remain as detailed in the adopted Housing Register and Allocations Policy.

364 COMMUNITY SCRUTINY CORPORATE HEALTHCHECK
AUGUST TO SEPTEMBER 2013

The Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services submitted a report on the performance of key indicators for Community Scrutiny Committee for the period August to September 2013, the detail of which was set out in the report now submitted and the attached Essential Reference Papers.

Members were advised that 4 EHPI targets had not been achieved (3 red and 1 amber), as detailed at paragraphs 2.2 – 2.5 of the report. Members were reminded however, that seasonal trends were a key factor in respect of these performance targets.

Members were also advised that, despite meeting the target for September 2013, EHPI 181 had shown a declining trend when performance was compared to the previous month, in relation to the time taken to process Housing Benefit new claims and change events.

The Performance Officer detailed the operation of the new Dashboard Module as detailed at Essential Reference Paper 'D'. Councillor J Mayes stated that performance monitoring should be kept simple and the Dashboard Module appeared arbitrary and difficult to understand.

Members had a general debate as to which aspects of the Dashboard Module were helpful or not and felt the most confusing area were the best or worst performing PI lists.

The Committee received the report.

RESOLVED – that (A) the reported performance for the period August to September 2013 be received; and

(B) Members' comments regarding the Dashboard Module as set out in Essential

Reference Paper 'D' of the report now submitted be noted.

365 PERFORMANCE INDICATOR REVIEW

The Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services submitted a report, following a request by the Executive on 4 June 2013, to review the relevance of the Council's performance indicators and to establish whether any new measures needed to be introduced to support the delivery of the Council's priorities.

The Committee thanked Councillors J Mayes and N Symonds for their input on behalf of Community Scrutiny Committee. The Performance Officer referred Members to the Essential Reference Papers for the review findings and the recommendations as detailed in Essential Reference Paper 'B'.

The Chairman commented on whether casual market stalls were available at Bishop's Stortford Market. She also commented on whether a Farmers' Market was an option for Bishop's Stortford. Councillor C Woodward enquired as to whether a competitive tendering exercise had been carried out for the market in the town.

Following a query from Councillor R Beeching, he was advised that the Sawbridgeworth Market was not owned or run via East Herts Council.

Members received the report and approved the recommendation now detailed.

RESOLVED – that the recommendations of the Review Team, as detailed in the report now submitted, be incorporated into the 2013/14 Performance Indicator Estimate and Future Targets report for consideration by the Executive in March 2014 in preparation for 2014/15.

366 SERVICE PLANS MONITORING APRIL – SEPTEMBER 2013

The Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services submitted a report summarising the Council's achievements against its priorities for 2013/14, in relation to the following service areas:

- Communication, Engagement and Culture
- Community Safety and Health
- Economic Development
- Housing
- Revenues and Benefits Shared Service

The Performance Officer provided a summary of the 31 actions within the 2013/14 Services Plans, including those which were either off target, had their completion dates revised, been suspended or deleted.

Councillor C Woodward commented on whether there should be a Councillor usage survey in respect of Covalent so that Officers could judge the level of usage amongst Members. The Committee referred to the new Dashboard Module at Essential Reference Paper 'Ci' and advised that it appeared to be relatively user friendly compared to the information previously presented to Members and presented a clear front summary sheet to the Service Plans.

The Committee received the progress and exceptions report.

RESOLVED – that (A) the progress against the Council's priorities and revised completion dates, suspensions and deletions against 2013/14 Service Plan actions and 2012/13 and 2011/12 Service Plan actions, be received; and

(B) Members' comments regarding the Dashboard Module as set out in Essential Reference Paper 'Ci' of the report now submitted be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.38 pm

Chairman
Date