

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON TUESDAY
13 SEPTEMBER 2016, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor J Wyllie (Chairman)
Councillors Mrs R Cheswright, K Crofton,
H Drake, M Freeman, R Henson,
M McMullen and S Reed

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors A Jackson, G McAndrew and
S Rutland-Barsby

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Democratic Services Officer
Jess Khanom	- Head of Operations
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
Kevin Steptoe	- Head of Planning and Building Control Services
David Thorogood	- Environmental Co-Ordinator
Liz Watts	- Chief Executive

260 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor G Cutting.

261 MINUTES - 21 JUNE 2016

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and

signed by the Chairman.

262 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman stated that this was Marian Langley's last meeting as the Council's Scrutiny Officer and on behalf of Members, wished her all the very best for her retirement.

The Chairman welcomed Jess Khanom, the new Head of Operations to the meeting.

263 SHARED SERVICE FOR WASTE AND STREET
CLEANSING - PROGRESS REPORT

The Head of Operations submitted a report on the progress made in relation to the Shared Waste and Street Cleansing Service with North Herts District Council. She explained that a tender document for the service would be published in early October 2016.

In response to a query from Councillor R Cheswright regarding the projected savings to be achieved, the Head of Operations explained that a lot of the work undertaken addressed the optimisation of the service.

Councillor M Freeman asked Officers to ensure that the new contract addressed Members' issues previously outlined.

The Chairman reminded Members that the Task and Finish Group had already undertaken a thorough review of the waste collection, recycling and street cleaning services in advance of the new contract.

The Committee noted the current progress of the Shared Waste Collection and Street Cleansing project.

RESOLVED – that the progress of the Shared Waste Collection and Street Cleansing project be noted.

CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLANS - PROGRESS AND PROBLEMS

The Head of Planning and Building Control submitted a report on the objectives and priorities for the Conservation and Heritage Service in the light of a previous decision to convene Conservation Area Reference Groups. He explained where Officers' resources had been directed and that a range of proactive work had been undertaken in Conservation Areas and what progress had been made.

Councillor K Crofton queried whether sufficient resources were being directed to this issue to ensure continued pro-activity and to increase momentum of the exercise. He suggested that this be increased. This was supported.

Councillor R Cheswright suggested that information be made readily available for the public to ensure that they know what they can and cannot do in Conservation Areas. The Head of Planning and Building Control provided clarification in response to this and a further question regarding the possible rationale in relation to an increase in the number of planning applications.

The Executive Member for Development and Council Support made reference to limited staff resources in relation to conservation area work. Councillor K Crofton stated that the Head of Planning and Building Control should be given increased resources to accelerate proactive work. This was supported.

The Committee noted the current work programme arrangements and asked the Head of Planning and Building Control to put forward a business case to increase resources.

RESOLVED – that (A) the balance in the output delivery by the Conservation and Heritage Service between reactive and proactive work be noted;

(B) the current work programme arrangements detailed in the report be endorsed; and

(C) Officers put forward a business case to increase Officer resources to accelerate proactive work in relation to Conservation Areas.

265 REVIEW OF CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN

The Head of Operations submitted a report regarding the establishment of a Task and Finish Group to review, rationalise and refresh the East Herts Climate Change Action Plan and to agree its draft terms of reference, as detailed in the report.

The Environmental Strategy and Development Manager outlined the report and sought Members' view as to whether they wished for a wider or narrower approach in developing a Climate Change Action Plan across the District.

The Executive Member for Environment and Public Open Space reminded Members that the original Climate Change Action Plan had been developed in 2009 and preferred the Action Plan to have a wider scope. Councillor K Crofton proposed a narrower review, specifically looking at areas within the Council's control and possibly targeting sports and leisure. This was supported by Councillor M McMullen. Councillor M Freeman suggested that a wider approach be taken and cited areas where the Council could influence matters, such as the use of solar energy within Development Management applications. Councillor H Drake stated that the Council should take a lead on such matters and felt that a wider approach be adopted.

After being put to the vote, it was agreed that the Task and Finish Group should adopt a wider approach to the development of a Climate Change Action Plan.

The Scrutiny Officer suggested that the Task and Finish Group should comprise six Members, with the Chairman of that Group being a Member of Environment Scrutiny Committee in terms of line accountability.

Councillors M Freeman and S Reed put forward their names for consideration on the Task and Finish Group. It was noted that the Leader would make a final decision on its membership.

RESOLVED – that (A) a Task and Finish Group comprising six Members be established to provide a wide review, rationalisation and refresh of the East Herts Climate Change Action Plan; and

(B) the draft terms of reference, as outlined within Essential Paper ‘B’ of the report submitted, be agreed.

266 PROPOSAL TO SET UP A TASK AND FINISH GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

The Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy submitted a report outlining the background on the need to establish an Task and Finish Group to review sustainable transport. The report also sought approval of the draft terms of reference as detailed in the report submitted.

The Chief Executive reminded Members that this issue had been discussed a number of times by Members on various “away days” in terms of what the Council could do to ease congestion on roads in the District. She explained that the issue had also been discussed with a number of Parish and Town Councils who had expressed concerns regarding congestion levels.

Councillor R Cheswright stated that people used cars in rural areas because of the lack of alternative methods of transport. The Chief Executive referred to the establishment of community transport schemes.

Councillor H Drake stated that Bishop’s Stortford was taking a lot of development, trains could not cope and that measures needed to be found to increase their capacity. Councillor M Freeman commented that there was a need to define what was meant by “sustainability” within the aims of the draft terms of reference. This was supported.

Councillor R Cheswright referred to the 1500 homes planned for Buntingford which did not have a train station. Councillor Cheswright suggested that consideration be given to introducing safer cycle routes.

The Committee approved the draft terms of reference for the Task and Finish Group to review sustainable transport with a membership of six.

Councillors J Wyllie, R Cheswright, M Freeman, R Henson and S Reed submitted their names for consideration on the Task and Finish Group.

RESOLVED – that (A) the draft terms of reference for the Task and Finish Group on Sustainable Transport as detailed in the report submitted, be approved;

(B) membership of the Task and Finish Group comprising six Members be agreed; and

(C) the aims within the Draft Terms of Reference's be amended to include the definition of "sustainability".

267 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman submitted a report setting out the future work programme for Environment Scrutiny Committee for 2016/17.

The Chairman stated that there were only two items proposed for the November meeting and suggested that the focus might be to ensure that there was sufficient lead in time for the two Task and Finish Groups to conduct their reviews and to both report to the meeting on 7 March 2017. He suggested that the meeting scheduled for 8 November 2016 be cancelled. This was supported.

The Committee supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that (A) the work programme, as now

detailed, be approved;

(B) the meeting of Environment Scrutiny Committee on 8 November 2016 be cancelled.

The meeting closed at 7.50 pm

Chairman

Date