

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY 22 MARCH 2011, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor D Andrews (Chairman)
Councillors R N Copping, R Gilbert,
G E Lawrence, J Mayes, J O Ranger,
J P Warren and M Wood

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors W Ashley, P A Ruffles,
S Rutland-Barsby and N Wilson

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Linda Bevan	- Committee Secretary
Lorna Georgiou	- Performance and Improvement Co-ordinator
Philip Hamberger	- Programme Director of Change
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
Alan Madin	- Director of Internal Services
Will O'Neill	- Head of Community and Cultural Services
Mekhola Ray	- Community Projects Team Manager
George A Robertson	- Director of Customer and Community Services

639 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor R Beeching.

640 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman referred to the death of Councillor J Hedley at the weekend. He asked all present to join with him in a minute silence to reflect upon the work of Councillor Hedley for the Council and community.

The Chairman thanked the Scrutiny Officer and Committee Secretary for their support of the Committee and himself as Chairman. He also thanked the Programme Director of Change, who was leaving the Authority, for his work on the C3W Programme and regular updates to the Committee.

641 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2010 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

642 CHANGING THE WAY WE WORK (C3W) PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Programme Director of Change submitted a report on the progress that had been made on the Changing the Way We Work (C3W) programme.

He reported that the programme was progressing well. A decant/phasing plan had been developed for the refurbishment of Wallfields and was in hand. The first refurbished area was now occupied. He praised the staff involved in particular IT and Facilities Management.

There were 50 homeworkers/casual homeworkers. All employees were being reassessed and this could lead to an increase in homeworking.

The Electronic Document and Records Management System rollout plan had been agreed and was ongoing.

The Office Communications System had been installed throughout the Council Offices. A number of Business Process Improvement (BPI) reports had been completed, were being carried out or were planned. Significant additional funding had been obtained from Improvement East to support this work.

A review of the automated telephone payment system was underway. This was being linked with the telecommunications review and implementation of chip and pin facilities. An ATM was being installed in reception at Wallfields for payments to the Council.

The Head of Customer Services had been appointed as the Programme Manager as the Programme Director was leaving the Authority. A Business Change Manager had also been made available to the Council free of charge by Capita to support the Programme Manager.

In response to questions from Members, the Programme Director explained the new Office Communications System provided a telephone via the computer for staff and their same phone number followed them around where ever they logged onto the system. He said he was not aware of plans to change the switchboard number of the Council for the public.

The Committee decided to receive the report.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

643 MONTHLY HEALTHCHECK - JANUARY 2011

The Leader of the Council submitted an exception report on finance and key performance indicators relating to Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee up to January 2011. The report contained a breakdown of information where remedial action was needed on salary, capital and revenue variances.

In response to a question, the Head of Community Services explained that figures for events at Hertford Theatre subsequent to the pantomime were now favourable. The pantomime had not made as much money as expected because of delays with the building contract.

Officers undertook to give written answers on why contract staff were employed for environmental health inspections (to Councillor J Mayes) and which services had received twice as many complaints as in the previous quarter (to Councillors D Andrews and R N Copping).

Councillor J Mayes repeated her previous complaint about the disabled lift access to Wallfields building and was assured this was in hand.

In response to a question, the Programme Director said that toilets would be refurbished in phases after the C3W Programme had finished as part of normal annual maintenance. Scuff marks to corridors would be addressed once the moves were completed.

Councillor J Mayes said she supported the establishment of a recycling reserve to offset future variations arising from the volatile commodities market.

Councillor J O Ranger commented on the difficulties of explaining the work of the Council to the public particularly with regard to Development Control. He said more work was needed on this.

He also suggested that the Executive should be informed that the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee would review the complaints about the Council as part of its future work programme. The Committee agreed with this.

The Committee decide to make the comments now detailed to the Executive.

RESOLVED – that the Executive be informed that:

(A) the variances and performance in the report now submitted be noted; and

(B) the Committee will add a review of complaints about the Council to the Work Programme for 2011/12.

644 COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The Chairman of the Community and Public Engagement Task and Finish Group submitted a report on the findings of the Group. It had been set up to review the current methods used by the Council to engage with the community and the public and recommend a sustainable, cost effective framework/strategy.

The strategy would ensure that the Council fulfilled its obligation on consultation and engaged with residents at a local level to bring improved opportunities and benefits to everyone in East Herts. The Group had also aspired to link its work with the Government's Big Society concept.

Details of the membership, methodology and objectives were given. External and internal expert witnesses had been interviewed. East Herts Councillors, civic societies, voluntary organisations and residents' associations had been surveyed and the views of parish councillors and young people had been considered.

The review looked at the Council's role as enabler, facilitator and mediator.

Councillor M Wood, Chairman of the Group highlighted the most important recommendations at the meeting. He also thanked the Members and Officers who had been involved in the work of the Group. He stressed the need to revise the Community Voice format.

Councillor J O Ranger referred to a number of issues which had arisen in the Group. These included renaming Officers involved in Community and Public engagement work as the "Community Support Team" or similar. This would be

achieved within existing budgets.

In addition, the renaming of some grants as “Pride Grants” or even “Community Pride Grants” where appropriate had been suggested and this would reflect one of the Council’s own priorities “Pride in East Herts”. Ward Members could be involved in the “signing off” of these. The Group had thought it essential that District Councillors were advised in advance of all planned events in their Wards e.g. visits by the Chairman.

The timetable for reviewing progress was discussed.

The Committee decided to recommend that the Executive approve the report as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that the Executive be informed that the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee considers that:

- (A) a revised East Herts Community and Public Engagement Strategy and Framework should be drawn up in line with the principles reflected in the report now submitted;
- (B) Senior Management should:
 - (1) consider whether staff involved in this work should be renamed the “Community Support Team”;
 - (2) implement the recommendations within the currently agreed budget and available Officer resources; and
- (C) the Task and Finish Group should reconvene late in September 2011 to review progress and report as necessary to the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee, meet again in March 2012 and carry out a full review in July 2012.

645 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2011/12

The Chairman of the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee submitted a report inviting the Committee to review its work programme.

The Scrutiny Officer reminded Members of the earlier decision to add a review of complaints to the work programme. She referred to an item in Link magazine inviting the public to put forward items for scrutiny and said these would need to be considered for inclusion on the programme.

Councillor J O Ranger asked that PIDs (Project Initiation Documents) for the shared services currently under consideration be added to the Work Programme and the Committee agreed with this.

The Committee decided to amend the work programme as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that the work programme now submitted be amended by the inclusion of a review of complaints and PIDs for Shared Services currently under consideration, and in addition, items received in response to the article on Scrutiny in the Link magazine would need to be considered.

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm

Chairman
Date