

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF  
PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE  
WAYTEMORE ROOM, BISHOP'S  
STORTFORD ON WEDNESDAY,  
11 FEBRUARY 2004 AT 7.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs D L E Hollebon (Chairman).  
Councillors E J Cain, A D Dodd, R Gilbert,  
J Hedley, G McAndrew, D E Mayes, L Pinnell,  
J O Ranger, J Warren.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Miranda Steward	- Executive Director (Operations)
Lorraine Blackburn	- Committee Secretary
Cliff Cardoza	- Head of Contract Services
Dave Cooper	- Performance Officer
Simon Drinkwater	- Assistant Director (Law and Control)
Simon Hawkins	- Performance Officer
Veronica Keeney	- AGRE Project Co-ordinator
Mary Orton	- Assistant Director (Policy and Performance)
Ceri Pettit	- Head of Performance
Paul Pullin	- Community Funding Officer
Carole Skidmore	- AGRE Project Development Officer
Alan Thompson	- Head of Economic and Cultural Development

631 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of  
Councillors S A Bull, D Clark, A M Graham, Mrs S Newton  
and A L Warman.

632 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman commented that Councillor S A Bull's wife should have undergone surgery but that the operation had been cancelled at the last minute. The Chairman undertook to convey Members' good wishes to Councillor S A Bull and his wife.

The Chairman extended a welcome to Ceri Pettit the new Head of Performance and to Cliff Cardoza the new Head of Contract Services.

It was noted that item 8 on the agenda, Best Value Survey - Provisional Results had been withdrawn, as further information was awaited from the Government.

633 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor L R Pinnell declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the report on Performance of the AGRE 1 and 2 European Social Fund by virtue of his employment.

634 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Committee passed a resolution pursuant to Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the press and public during consideration of the business referred to in Minute 636 on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act.

RESOLVED ITEMS

635 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2003 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

ACTION636 RISK MANAGEMENT

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Member for Corporate Facilities on the implementation of action plans to mitigate and control risks tracked by strategic risk registers required by the Local Code of Corporate Governance.

The Committee noted that the principles of risk management were also embedded within the Council's Financial Regulations and Financial Procedures which required the Executive to approve the Council's Risk Management Policy Statement and Strategy. This document had been approved by the Executive on 9 September 2003.

It was noted that as part of the reporting arrangements, Risk Champions were required to provide feedback and managerial assurance to the Executive on a six monthly basis after the scrutiny process had had an opportunity of reviewing the strategy. The Risk Management Statement was also subject to annual review by the Internal Audit section to confirm the integrity of the management assurance statements and give opinions on the systems of risk management.

Risk registers had been prepared covering the following strategic risks:

- Policy and Decisions
- External Factors
- Financial Risk
- Service Delivery
- Reputation Change Manager

The Assistant Director (Law and Control) explained the structure of the registers and gave an example of the risk analysis process. The presence of a Risk Management Strategy impacted favourably on the Council's insurance policy. The implementation of such a strategy was also

ACTION

recommended by the Council's External Auditors, PKF.

It was noted that the system of risk registers had been informally adopted by Risk Champions at the start of the 2003/04 financial year prior to the formal approval of the Council's Risk Management Policy Statement and Strategy by the Executive on 9 September 2003.

A Management Assurance Statement had been provided for the period 1 April 2003 to 30 September 2003 with no areas of concern.

Members commented that a Tree Condition Survey was an issue requiring consideration and sought clarification on some of the Risk Ratings within the Register. Some dates required amendment where indicated. It was also suggested that the officer's name in Risk Register B10 be deleted.

Concern was expressed in relation to the decriminalisation of on-street parking and clarifying areas of responsibility. Additionally, given the complexity of the Risk Register document, there was a need to give further thought to its layout.

Members expressed their support of the Risk Management Strategy. However in terms of its format, it was suggested that officers should present this in a matrix format and that the inconsistencies mentioned above be amended.

RESOLVED - that (A) subject to the minor amendments now mentioned, the report be received and referred to the Executive, and

ALC

(B) officers be requested to give further thought to the format of the Risk Management Register being developed into a matrix format.

AFS

ACTION637 PERFORMANCE OF THE AGRE 1 AND 2 EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND PROJECTS 2001 TO 2003

The Head of Economic and Cultural Development submitted a report on the performance of the AGRE 1 and 2 European social fund projects (including the Hertfordshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) which delivered learning opportunities to farmers and rural businesses.

The Committee noted that projects were delivered through partnerships which varied from project to project which were set out in the report together with statistics to cover the number of attendees, gender, ethnicity etc of the participants. In summary 480 people and 675 companies had benefited from the programmes.

The Post Office was a specific project which had benefited from AGRE funding and which now provided a valuable service to the local community.

The Committee noted that participation and activity from key groups who were disadvantaged and who faced discrimination had increased and that there were significant increases in the numbers of people from ethnic groups and disabled people. The projects had benefited more women with training and support to increase their position in the labour market. Substantial success had also been achieved in delivering learning and business support to older people ie those over 50.

The two projects had attracted budgets of £1,042,505 (AGRE 1 was £399,320 and AGRE 2 £643,185) and had exceeded targets for drawing down funds and "spin offs" which attracted £180,000 worth of funding. New methods of EU "co-financing" were reported which allowed for 100% of the budget to be provided to the organisations delivering the training/service.

The Committee agreed to receive the report on this matter.

ACTION

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

638 CULTURAL STRATEGY ACTION PLAN - CHILDREN'S  
PLAY AND PARKS: PROGRESS TO DATE

The Committee considered a report by the Assistant Director (Policy and Performance) updating Members on the implementation of the Children's Play and Parks sections of the Council's Cultural Strategy launched in June 2002. Appendices covering Children's Play and Parks and their respective key actions and updates were attached to the report.

Members queried the issue of distance in relation to parks and children with disabilities. The Assistant Director (Policy and Performance) undertook to refer this issue to the relevant Head of Service. The Executive Director (Operations) explained the difficulties associated with the proliferation of small playgrounds usually located close to homes and the nuisance this could cause by older children.

The "six acre" standard was explained. A Member sought clarification on the issue of playgrounds and equipment in rural areas and the responsibilities of Parish Councils. Further information was sought on the disbandment of the playbus.

In response to concerns about the lack of progress of a Parks Management Plan, Members were advised that work on such a plan had recently commenced.

The Head of Contract Services undertook to write to a Member on the progress of the management plan for Southern County Park. The Executive Director (Operations) updated Members in relation to the issue of the skateboard board park in Hertford.

APP

RESOLVED - that the report be received.

ACTION

639 BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS -  
QUARTERLY MONITORING (OCTOBER - DECEMBER  
2003)

---

The Committee considered a report by the Assistant Director (Policy and Performance) presenting the performance statistics for October, November and December for the Council's national and local Best Value Performance Indicators.

The Assistant Director (Policy and Performance) commented that 50% of the indicators were on or above target, 38% were under target and 12% were significantly under. Those which were significantly under target related to:

- BV109 (% of major, minor and other planning applications determined) and LPI 61 (% of all planning applications from householders dealt with within 8 weeks) - this was under extensive management review.
- LPI 3 - Building Control - performance was expected to improve in the next quarter following the installation of a new IT system.

Members sought clarification on the issue of cumulative and actual figures specifically in relation to BV14 and BV9 and requested that future reports clarify this aspect.

The Executive Director (Operations) explained the difficulties encountered in relation to the poor performance of BV109 and LPI 61. Specifically this related to staffing recruitment problems, the calculation of the 8 week period of determination and the change in IT systems which all detrimentally contributed to the poor performance of those particular PI's. Figures were currently being monitored weekly and early indications showed that that section was 75% on target.

The Head of Performance explained the anomaly in relation to Council Tax and the effects of direct debiting

APP

ACTION

relation to Council Tax and the effects of direct debiting arrangements, and clarified the issue in relation to BV15 employees retiring, LP 41 (b) and 14.2. The issue of footpath lighting was discussed and the Assistant Director (Policy and Performance) undertook to investigate this matter with the service department.

In relation to LPI 45, it was suggested that the target should be amended to reflect "0".

RESOLVED - that the report be received.

640 BEST VALUE REVIEW OF HEALTH AND LIVING SUPPORT

The Committee considered a report by the Assistant Director (Policy and Performance) on the scope of a review of health and living support in the light of the increasing demands on the services over the next 20 years. The review team had identified various key services for the elderly and vulnerable people and these included:

- Meals on Wheels
- Bus passes
- Leisure and fitness concessions to older people
- GP referral schemes
- Health promotion
- Future provision of sheltered/supported housing
- Effectiveness of referral systems and procedures for vulnerable people

The review would consult with Members and other services.

Clarification was sought on the issue of external partners and who would be consulted.

Members commented on the meals on wheels service and questioned the need for this service. The issue of referral systems were discussed and the need to involve the CAB



ACTION

and Age Concern.

Members were particularly concerned that the emphasis of the review was on the elderly and agreed that the scope should be widened to include the young and vulnerable. It was suggested that the Herts Homeless Group should also be consulted.

RESOLVED - that the scope of the Best Value Review of Health and Living Support be widened to include the young, vulnerable and homeless and that the consultees include Age Concern and the CAB.

APP

The meeting closed at 9.15 pm.

Chairman	.....
Date	.....