

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE
WAYTEMORE ROOM, BISHOP'S
STORTFORD ON TUESDAY, 9 MARCH
2004 AT 7.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs D L E Hollebon (Chairman).
Councillors J Hedley, G McAndrew, D E Mayes,
S Newton, J O Ranger, A L Warman, J Warren.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor M Wood

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Rachel Stopard	- Executive Director (Marketing)
Lorraine Blackburn	- Committee Secretary
Shirley Clark	- Assistant Director (Direct and Contract Services)
Alaine Clarke	- Performance Officer
Dave Cooper	- Performance Officer
Simon Drinkwater	- Assistant Director (Law and Control)
Neal Hodgson	- Assistant Director (Regulatory Services)
Andrew Holley	- Cultural Strategy and Museums Officer
Will O'Neill	- Head of Housing and Community Planning
Mary Orton	- Assistant Director (Policy and Performance)
Bernard Perry	- Assistant Director (Human Resources)
Ceri Pettit	- Head of Performance
Dave Tweedie	- Assistant Director (Financial Services)

Stephen Wilson

- Arts Development
Officer

714 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors P R Ballam, S A Bull, D Clark, E J Cain, R Gilbert, A Graham, L Pinnell.

715 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairman welcomed Steve Wilson, the Arts Development Officer, who had joined the Council last October.

RESOLVED ITEMS

ACTION

716 MINUTES

It was noted that Councillor P R Ballam had attended the meeting on 11 February 2004 but had been omitted from the list of attendees.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2004 and as amended, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

717 CULTURAL STRATEGY ACTION PLAN – ARTS, FACILITIES AND SERVICES: PROGRESS TO DATE

Stephen Wilson gave an in depth presentation concerning the role of the Arts Development Officer and how East Herts Council supports the arts within the district. His presentation covered:

- Advice on funding and development opportunities
- The Arts Award

ACTION

- Partnership arrangements with outside agencies and the community
- The creation of diversionary activities
- Artistic/development
- Overcoming barriers and creative partnerships
- Specific strengths and challenges of the District
- Encouraging groups to work together
- Developing the District's tourism
- Current projects eg Pop Idol, internet magazine and the work of the Youth Council

Members sought clarification on the Awards Scheme and the difficulties of linking towns and their arts programmes.

Concern was expressed at the perceived bureaucracy of the Safety Advisory Team which appeared to hinder the arts and the timetabling of specific functions. A report back to Performance Scrutiny was requested.

APP

In reviewing issues associated with Castle Hall Members asked that consideration be given to using this venue as a cinema. Officers commented that Castle Hall and its future use was under review and it was anticipated that a report would be ready by mid April 2004. Issues concerning the profitability of production programmes were discussed and Members were advised that certain arts groups using Castle Hall benefited from a variety of hidden arts subsidies.

The Assistant Director (Direct and Contract Services) assured Members that the report on Castle Hall would be wide ranging, detailing a variety of options and scheduling.

ACTION

Assurances were sought on the introduction on Farmer's Markets. Members asked that the initiative be given sufficient publicity to ensure the success of the events.

ACO

RESOLVED – that a further report be presented to Performance Scrutiny on the function of the Safety Advisory Team with specific reference to Arts initiatives.

718 HOUSING STRATEGY – STOCK TRANSFER UNDERTAKINGS – MONITORING REPORT

Prior to consideration of the report, the Chairman, on behalf of Members acknowledged that the Council had undergone a rigorous assessment process and had achieved the "Fit for Purpose" status. Members congratulated the Housing Team on the achievement.

The Head of Housing and Community Planning submitted a report on the progress and performance of the Council's housing strategy and specifically in relation to the performance of the Stort Valley and Riversmead Housing Associations following the transfer of the Council's housing stock to them in March 2002.

The Head of Housing advised that the final version of the Housing Strategy for 2003/06 had now been published and would be available on the Council's website.

It was noted that prior to the transfer of the Council's Stock to Riversmead and Stort Valley Housing Associations in March 2002 a number of conditions were imposed and undertakings given which would be monitored on a quarterly basis. On the face of it, both housing associations appeared to be performing well against the undertakings made.

Clarification was sought on the targets for Right to Buy properties which appeared to Members to be unrealistic. The Head of Housing commented that these were

ACTION

aspirational targets.

Members sought assurances that the targets were actually being met and of the danger of complacency on the part of the Housing Associations. Officers were however, satisfied that the targets were being met and agreed to report back to Performance Scrutiny on the issue in six months time.

APP

RESOLVED – that officers report back in six months on the issue of monitoring and target achievement.

719 STRATEGIC PLANS 2003/04 – ACHIEVEMENTS

The Assistant Director (Policy and Performance) submitted a report setting out the achievements made by the eight divisions of the Council against the targets set for 2003/04. These had been established with due regard to improving the sustainability of the organisation and in supporting the Council's seven corporate priorities. The new service planning framework now linked to the budget setting process was explained and how priorities were determined.

At the request of Members the Assistant Director clarified the position on the Local Plan Inquiry.

Members requested that further Joint Working with other Councils on Member development be investigated. Additionally that information should be submitted via the Members' Information Bulletin on air monitoring. The Assistant Director (Regulatory Services) undertook to follow up on this.

AD
HR

RESOLVED – that (A) the report be noted on the progress made on the strategic plans for 2003/04;

(B) further joint working on Member training with other authorities be investigated, and

(C) Air Monitoring reports be published at regular intervals in the Members Information Bulletin

intervals in the Members Information Bulletin.

720 STRATEGIC PLANS 2004/05 – ACTIONS

The Assistant Director (Policy and Performance) submitted a report which set out the actions for the next 12 months and beyond for the eight Council divisions to undertake for 2004/05 . These plans were the mechanism by which corporate objectives were delivered. As with the previous report, the new service planning framework was linked to the budget setting process and used to determine the Council's priorities to reflect the District Community Strategy, direct resources, set targets and review progress and performance.

A Member sought feedback on the issue of the cash offices and the introduction of the One Stop Shops. The Executive Director gave assurances that it was the Council's intention to continue with a local presence but that this should fit with local need. She undertook to write to him separately. It was acknowledged that staff at the cash offices provided a valuable service on a range of subjects.

EDM

Members welcomed the proposed review of the Development Control Committee and queried how this would be undertaken. It was requested that the issue should be reported to Performance Scrutiny prior to any report to the Executive by the target date of September 2004.

APP

Members supported the work undertaken so far on play schemes and requested that the Arts Development Officer should progress the arts/crafts element of the schemes further following the success of the Harry Potter theme last year. It was suggested that a range of activities should be developed to encourage young people to remain involved over a longer period of time.

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ACS

Concern was expressed at the level of street cleansing in a specific Member's Ward. He referred to litter and broken glass which had been there for some time. The Assistant Director (Direct and Contract Services) expressed surprise that this had not been attended to and assured the Member that such issues should be resolved within 24 hours. She undertook to address the issue next day.

On going litter problems and grass cutting at Sele Farm were referred to. The Assistant Director outlined the service plan for the area and monitoring for this particular site.

It was noted that the level of cleanliness at Anchor Street in Bishop's Stortford had improved. It was acknowledged that litter attracted litter and the possibility of imposing on the spot fines for littering could be worth exploring. However, concern was expressed at the success and viability of developing a programme of activities to change public behaviour.

Clarification was sought on the proposal to increase voter turnout by 2%.

Plans to sustain energy were welcomed. A Member commented that a proposal agreed some time ago, to install Solar Panels to Council Buildings had not yet been implemented.

On the issue of a Traveller's Policy, the Assistant Director (Regulatory Services) commented that the Council needed to produce a wide ranging policy which would also include issues such as access to water and other facilities.

Members acknowledged and supported the endeavours of officers to produce such wide ranging strategic actions plans for 2004/05 which would further the Council's Corporate Priorities.

RESOLVED – that the (A) comprehensive report for the ensuing year be noted.

the ensuing year be noted;

(B) that officers report back on the proposed review of the Development Control Committee, and

(C) Members' comments be referred to the Executive.

721 PERFORMANCE TARGETS FOR 2004/05 FINANCIAL YEAR

The Assistant Director (Policy and Performance) submitted a report setting out the Council's performance to date compared to 2003/04 targets.

Members were reminded that the Government requires all local authorities to monitor the performance of their services against a list of National Performance Indicators supplemented by the Council's own Local Performance Indicators.

It was noted that some performance indicators were determined by Hertfordshire Police and these were listed in the report. Some other performance indicators both local and national could not be included in the report and reasons for this were set out in the report.

Areas of specific concern in relation to the Performance Indicators were explained and these related to:

BV3, BV4, - national decline of satisfaction levels of Local Government associated with Council Tax. Members felt that this target was optimistic.

BV8 – targets had been revised to 100%.

BV157 – electronic interactions had increased and were still on target for 100% in 2005.

BV183 – noted that one household was reflected in these statistics. The Council's policy on the use of hostels and

ACTION

statistics. The Council's policy on the use of hostels and bed and breakfast accommodation was explained. Members felt that the targets for 2004-06 should be amended to read 6 weeks maximum.

BV109 – noted that recent improvements in the planning division eg new IT systems, staffing resources etc was turning service delivery around.

BV176 – concern was expressed on this target and Members APP asked that a further report be presented to Performance Scrutiny.

RESOLVED – that the (A) report be noted and that a further report be submitted to Performance Scrutiny in relation to BV176;

(B) that the performance indicator in relation to BV186 be amended to reflect 6 weeks as a maximum, and

(C) Members' comments be referred to the Executive.

The meeting closed at 9.40 pm