

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
 PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY
 COMMITTEE HELD IN THE
 WAYTEMORE ROOM,
 THE CAUSEWAY, BISHOP'S
 STORTFORD ON TUESDAY, 6 JULY
 2004 AT 7.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs D E L Hollebon (Chairman).
 Councillors S A Bull, N Burdett, E J Cain,
 A D Dodd, R Gilbert, A M Graham, G McAndrew,
 D E Mayes, S Newton, L R Pinnell, D Richards.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Miranda Steward	- Executive Director
Lorraine Blackburn	- Committee Secretary
Phillipa Brent-Isherwood	- National Management Trainee
Cliff Cardoza	- Head of Contract Services
Dave Cooper	- Performance Officer
Paul Griffin	- Community Safety and Partnership Manager
Julie Lawrence	- Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator
Mary Orton	- Assistant Director (Policy and Performance)
Bernard Perry	- Assistant Director (Human Resources)
Ceridwen Pettit	- Head of Performance

135 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of
 Councillors P R Ballam, J O Ranger and J P Warren.

136 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman commented that Andrew Holley had arranged for Members to visit Scotts Grotto in Ware on 28 July 2004 at 2.30pm. Any Member wishing to attend should contact Andrew Holley direct.

RESOLVED ITEMS

ACTION

137 MINUTES

(a) Safety Advisory Team

At the meeting on 1 June 2004, nominations were sought from Members in furthering the work of the Safety Advisory Group following its establishment. Councillor McAndrew nominated himself in relation to the work of the Team.

(b) Best Value Performance Plan 2004

The Head of Performance undertook to re-circulate Members with further information on the Best Value Plan.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 1 June 2004 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

138 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor L R Pinnell declared a personal interest in the matter referred to at Minute 143 – Best Value Review of Environmental Stewardship, by virtue of the fact that he was Secretary to the Chamber of Commerce.

139 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR – PRESENTATION

Paul Griffin gave a presentation on Anti-Social behaviour which ranged from ball games to threats from neighbours

ACTION

and people sleeping in cars.

The definition of harassment was explained. Legislation to counter such behaviour was contained in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (Anti-Social Behaviour Orders – ASBO's) and the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003; Section 30 powers to disperse one or more persons and ASB - Policy for Registered Social Landlords.

It was noted that the Community Safety and Partnership Manager and the Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator worked closely with various partners including the Police, Housing Associations and voluntary agencies to bring about long term solutions to reported incidents. A Care Review Group met bi-monthly to consider cases and what action should be taken. The sharing of information with partners, was considered the key to bringing about an appropriate response to anti-social behaviour.

Short term funding had been received from the Home Office to fund a co-ordinator. A Member commented on the Government's recent announcement of a grant of £2m for Youth Shelter Projects and possible access to this grant funding.

It was noted that the team had issued more than 200 incident diaries; two had been returned. Approximately 30 ABC's (Anti-social behaviour contracts) had been issued. Anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) were considered to be the last resort and a failure to comply with an ASBO could result in imprisonment. It was reported that a Section 30 Notice had recently been made to dispel youths congregating in Bell Street. Sawbridgeworth.

It was stressed that any anti-social behaviour should in the first instance, be reported to the Police. The Community Safety Team endeavoured to come to a longer term solution to incidents of anti-social behaviour.

A number of questions were asked on the effectiveness of ABCs and ASBOs. Concern was expressed at the

ACTION

terminology of these orders and of people's expectations. It was stressed that the work of the Team needed further publicity albeit, it was acknowledged that information had been disseminated via The Link and at Community Voice meetings. An article would be placed in the Members' Information Bulletin concerning the supply of diaries to report incidents.

The Chairman, on behalf of Members, complimented the officers on the work done so far and thanked them for the presentation.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

140 EQUAL PAY AUDIT AND LOCAL LABOUR MARKET REVIEW

The Assistant Director (Human Resources) submitted a report which had been requested by Members at their meeting on 1 June 2004. The report commented on the work carried out as part of an equal pay review and local labour market review for the Council which had been recommended by the Pay Commission to the Employers Organisations and Trades Unions at the end of 2003.

The Equal Pay Audit had four main objectives:

- to comply with the recommendations of the Pay Commission
- to fulfil one of the conditions set by the national employers as part of the current pay deal
- to contribute to the aim of the Council to achieve level 2 of the Diversity Standard for Local Government.
and
- to ensure that staff were being paid fairly and equitably regardless of gender, race or any disability.

ACTION

Phillipa Brent-Isherwood, Management Trainee gave a presentation on the methodology and the findings of the equal pay audit and the local labour market review. She explained that the Council was one of the first local authorities to carry out such an audit.

The presentation covered:

- definitions of “Equal Work” (like work, equivalent work and work of equal value)
- data sources (EHC’s establishment list, equal opportunities, monitoring survey, Job Evaluation Database and the Payroll system)
- UNISON
- Methodology: the Local Labour Market Review (42 jobs were profiled across 47 organisations).

Initial findings had revealed that East Herts Council operated its pay schemes free from any bias or discrimination. Generally, the Council was performing better against county councils and the private sector than other districts. There were however, some areas of concern about equal pay for work of equal value at both the lower end of the pay scales and also at the mid and higher end of the pay scales. This would be investigated further. The Equal Pay Audit was currently being reviewed by the Directors Board who would be addressing areas of concern.

Members sought clarification on the level of East Herts weighting and flexibility. The Assistant Director (Human Resources) explained that the Council had not opted out of the National Conditions of Service and that there was still much the Council could do in terms of financially supporting staff.

A Member sought further information on the issue of “Equal Work” in the context that some jobs were viewed as

ACTION

“women’s” jobs (ie reception work) and “men’s” jobs (ie as a caretaker). It was explained that further work would be undertaken from a qualitative viewpoint.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

141 SICKNESS ABSENCE

The Assistant Director (Human Resources) submitted a report concerning the increase in the sickness absence levels for the year 2003/04 compared with 2002/03. The report also addressed sickness absence from an Occupational Health viewpoint, including immunisation and the issue of long-term sickness.

It was noted that there had been an increase in sickness absence. This figure had been affected by an increase in the level of long term sickness including a particularly bad period over January, February and March for short-term sickness which, more often than not, related to cold and flu illnesses.

The issue of immunisation was considered but it was noted that the Council could not insist that staff should be vaccinated against flu strains. Further information would be sought from the Occupational Health Adviser in the Autumn 2004. Members were assured that the sickness absence policy was under review. A system which would flag sickness patterns to line Managers would be introduced.

It was noted that absenteeism was higher in the public sector than the private sector with an average 9 days taken. Members sought clarification on the possibility that staff may be using sickness as “available holiday”. The Assistant Director (Human Resources) commented that in such circumstances, staff would be looked at individually. Courses in stress management were being investigated.

The Executive Director commented that the report had been submitted to Directors Board which had requested

ACTION

that patterns of sickness prior and after holidays and sickness taken on a Monday and Friday be investigated further.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

142 FLY TIPPING

The Assistant Director (Direct and Contract Services) submitted a report on fly tipping activity in East Herts including trends and performance.

It was noted that fly tipping responsibilities were shared between local authorities and the Environment Agency and that legislation was currently being reviewed to make enforcement easier for local authorities including “stop and search” powers. Fly tipping carried a £2,000 fine for those caught.

The Head of Contract Services commented that the level of fly tipping in East Herts was extremely low compared to other Councils in Hertford. East Herts had 91 tonnes compared to Dacorum with 1808 tonnes. It was acknowledged that fly-tipping was on the increase in East Herts with approximately 40 reports of fly tips a month by the public. Concerns were expressed about the accumulation of waste on private sites. Officers commented that this issue would be considered through the Best Value Review of Environmental Stewardship currently underway.

Wherever possible the Council aimed to deal with all fly tips within 24 hours of being notified with the average response time currently at 0.62 days. It was noted that the average cost of removing from a fly-tip was approximately £50.

In terms of prosecutions, it was noted that tippers avoided tipping at the same location making prevention and enforcement difficult. The Council’s covert surveillance equipment was costly to use and had only been used

ACTION

where a number of fly tips had occurred at the same location in a short time frame.

The Head of Contract Services advised that the Council did charge residents for the removal of bulky items and Members commented on the appropriateness of this in relation to pensioners and people on low incomes.

RESOLVED – that (A) a further report be prepared on the issue of the current charging policy for the collection of bulky waste from domestic premises, and ACS

(B) the issue of the accumulation of waste on private sites be addressed through the Best Value Review of Environmental Stewardship. APP

143 BEST VALUE REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

The Executive Director submitted a progress report on the current review of Environmental Stewardship.

Sub Groups had been formed, each having a specific scope and terms of reference to look at the following:

- endeavouring to conserve and preserve East Herts' historic and rural environment,
- working with other agencies to encourage and facilitate East Herts' residents to use environmentally friendly forms of transport to minimise the impact of pollution and congestion, and
- encouraging sustainability in the "new build" environment.

The methodology for the survey was detailed in the report including identifying "best practice" authorities such as Cambridge City Council, Harlow (Newhall Development)

ACTION

and the London Borough of Sutton (BedZed).

Further themes included:

- land and habitat management and conserving East Herts as an environment for surrounding urban areas to use and enjoy as a facility and natural resources, and
- considering how residential areas look and “feel”.

It was noted that each of the sub groups had used information obtained from previous consultations eg MORI Residents’ Polls, Community Voice and Best Value Performance Indicator General Satisfaction Survey. Additionally, feedback had been sought from Parish Councils at the Rural Conference. Further consultation was planned with key stakeholders.

It was suggested that items 3 and 8 could be linked with the use of Section 106 agreements and issues of sustainability from a planning application perspective.

The issue of car sharing was discussed and it was suggested that Stansted Airport be approached in relation to their policy on car sharing.

RESOLVED – that (A) the report be received,

(B) residents’ groups be consulted on Environmental Stewardship (Steering Group Action) APP

(C) the review of Development Control consider the issue of “sustainability” in relation to planning applications and site visits, and APP

(D) Stansted Airport be contacted in relation to their policy on car sharing. APP

ACTION144 DEFERRED ITEMS

RESOLVED - that given the lateness of the hour, the remaining items of business be deferred for consideration at the next meeting on 7 September 2004.

The meeting closed at 10.20 pm.