

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
POLICY DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD
ON TUESDAY, 13 JULY 2004 AT
7.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor J O Ranger (Chairman).
Councillors K Barnes, R N Copping, A D Dodd,
G Francis, M H Goldspink, D L E Hollebon,
D Richards, T K H Robertson, A Schweizer,
J D Thornton, N Wilson.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor W Ashley.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Miranda Steward	- Executive Director
Rachel Stopard	- Executive Director
Linda Bevan	- Committee Secretary
Andrea Gilmour	- Planning Officer
Neal Hodgson	- Assistant Director (Regulatory Services)
Will O'Neill	- Head of Community Development and Housing
Mary Orton	- Assistant Director (Policy and Performance)
Martin Shrosbree	- Chief Surveyor
Claire Sime	- Planning Officer
David Thorogood	- Environmental Co-ordinator

145 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of
Councillors G McAndrew and D E Mayes.

RESOLVED ITEMSACTION146 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2004 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

147 TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE

The Policy Development Scrutiny Committee had considered findings of the Housing Option Review Group at a previous meeting and a further report on provision of hostels and other temporary accommodation for homeless people was submitted by the Assistant Director (Policy and Performance).

The Housing Option Review Team had recommended a change in the management of hostels. The current management/maintenance contract was due to expire in March 2005. The Council could decide to manage and maintain the hostels in-house; contract out the management and maintenance of the hostels; sell the hostels or lease them long term.

If the hostels were taken back in-house there could be problems with staffing and providing an effective management system. Another difficulty was the state of repair of the hostels.

An advantage of contracting out the service would be that a Registered Social Landlord would be better skilled and equipped than the Council to provide an effective service. However, previous tenders had only attracted one bidder and if this happened again, the service would have to be provided in-house.

The Review Team had felt the offer of an asset with a potential redevelopment value would be significantly more attractive than a small scale management contract. In the

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long term, sub-standard accommodation could be replaced by good quality accommodation and the total quantity of accommodation within the District could be increased. Use of hostels could be controlled better if long term leasing was employed rather than selling the properties.

The Assistant Director (Policy and Performance) added that the Review Team thought Thele should be developed as a hostel for single people, Hillcrest as a hostel for families and Bridgefoot be sold.

Officers could also seek development of a new hostel as part of a Section 106 Agreement in the future. Detailed terms and conditions of any leasing arrangements would be agreed by the Executive.

Hillcrest had grounds which could be used for family units but care would need to be taken concerning increased vehicle traffic to and from the site. .

The Committee agreed to recommend the Executive to offer the hostels to a Registered Social Landlord on a long term lease controlling the future development as suggested by officers

RESOLVED – that the Executive be informed that Policy Development Scrutiny Committee considers that two hostels for the homeless should be disposed of on a long term lease with the use of Thele for single people, Hillcrest for families and Bridgefoot should be sold.

APP/ALC

148 DISTRICT COMMUNITY STRATEGY ACTION PLAN
2004 – 2007

The East Herts Community Strategy had been launched in November 2003. The Assistant Director (Policy and Performance) submitted a report on draft action plans for implementing the strategy. Ten priority themes had been identified and an Officer Group had drawn up specific

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actions for all of them with costings.

Members considered the action plan, raised a number of questions and made suggestions for a more easily understandable layout.

RESOLVED – that Members' comments be incorporated into the action plan presented to the Local Strategic Partnership Board for endorsement.

APP

149 DEVELOPMENT CONTROL IN RURAL AREAS

The Chairman of the Committee had requested a report on Development Control in Rural Areas. Four areas had been identified for discussion as follows:-

- the sustainable rural community
- key relevant policy areas
- implementation of policies when considering development
- unauthorised development in rural areas.

It was reported that policies sought to retain smaller dwellings in the rural area and Metropolitan Green Belt by only allowing limited small scale extensions. There were three policy areas covering this issue and Local Plan Policies were strictly applied in rural areas. The Second Deposit version of the Local Plan sought greater flexibility for farm diversification. Unauthorised development was tackled in a proactive manner.

The Chairman explained that planning policies did not always support policies for economic development as well as they could. Members supported his suggestion for a panel to be established to consider the matter further, and to provide greater guidance for them and the public on development in rural areas possibly by guidance notes as

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provided by other local authorities.

RESOLVED – that a Policy Development Panel – Development Control in Rural Areas comprised of Councillors W Ashley, R N Copping, J O Ranger, D Richards and W Ashley plus two others to be appointed, be established to consider Development Control in Rural Areas.

ALC

150 ENERGY EFFICIENCY

A presentation was made on energy efficiency and how the Council could set a good example in its own buildings, transport and employment practices.

The Assistant Director (Regulatory Services) had circulated a background paper on the appointment of an Energy Efficiency Officer. This had been agreed by Council but the Policy Development Scrutiny Committee had asked for a postponement of the appointment to allow time for the Committee to consider the broader issues of energy efficiency.

Members asked a number of questions which would be answered in a further report to the Committee. They also considered the appointment of the Energy Efficiency Officer and recommended this should proceed.

RESOLVED – that (A) a further report on energy efficiency be submitted to the Committee, and

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(B) to recommend that the appointment of the Energy Efficiency Officer now proceed as previously agreed.

ARS

151 FORWARD PLAN FOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee Chairman submitted a Forward Plan for the work of the Committee. It was suggested that an additional item for the next meeting on Contaminated Land Policy be

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submitted, and this was agreed by the Committee. He explained that there would be a delay in reports on the consultation on licensing policy and Regional Spatial Strategy 14. A further report on energy efficiency would also be submitted.

RESOLVED – that the Forward Plan for Policy Development Scrutiny Committee as set out in Appendix 'D' of the report submitted be approved as amended.

ALC

The meeting closed at 10.15 pm