

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
POLICY DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD
ON TUESDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 2004 AT
7.30 PM

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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillors W Ashley and M P A McMullen.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Miranda Steward	- Executive Director
Rachel Stopard	- Executive Director
Philip Baxter	- Interim Licensing Manager
Linda Bevan	- Committee Secretary
Phillipa Brent-Isherwood	- Graduate Management Trainee
Neal Hodgson	- Assistant Director (Regulatory Services)
Will O'Neill	- Head of Community Development and Housing
Mary Orton	- Assistant Director (Policy and Performance)
Georgina Stanton	- Assistant Director (Communications and Customer Services)

269 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors E J Cain, A D Dodd, Mrs M H Goldspink and D E Mayes.

270 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Councillor declared a personal and prejudicial interest as follows and left the meeting during consideration and voting on it.

<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Minute</u>	<u>By virtue of:</u>
R N Copping	Housing Needs Survey 2004	Having submitted a planning application for development of affordable housing.

RESOLVED ITEMSACTION271 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2004 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

272 LICENSING POLICY

The Assistant Director (Regulatory Services) gave a verbal report on the current position of the Council's Licensing Policy.

It was reported that the Government had recently confirmed the proposals for implementation of the Licensing Act 2003. A Licensing Policy had been prepared for the District Council and wide consultation was being carried out. A report would be made to the November meeting of the Committee on the results of the consultation.

ACTION

Members asked questions on the regulations eg concerning whether someone with a personal licence had to be present at all times if alcohol was being sold, who would be eligible to apply for straightforward transfer to a personal licence during the period for changing to the new system, when temporary event notices would be appropriate, arrangements for takeaway food premises, and interests preventing Councillors making decisions on applications at Committee. It was explained that consultation was also being carried out by Central Government on these regulations and the exact details and how they would be interpreted was still to be made clear.

The arrangements for meetings to make decisions on applications which could not be approved by officers were considered. A pool of Members who could be flexible about meeting times would be needed as a large number of applications might be received.

RESOLVED - that the Executive be informed that the Policy Development Scrutiny Committee considers that some applications should be considered at sites near the applicant's area eg the Council Offices in Bishop's Stortford.

273 PREPARING A PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Assistant Director (Communications and Customer Services) submitted a report on the development of a public engagement strategy for East Herts Council.

The Council had committed itself to enhancing opportunities for public access and engagement. The development of a public engagement strategy would support this. It was reported that the extent to which local people related positively to local authorities was regarded by many people to be as essential to effective local government as the delivery of high quality services.

Research had recently been carried out to establish levels of awareness of current processes, determine perception

ACTION

of awareness of current processes, determine perception of them and seek suggestions for improvements. A report on this would be submitted to the Executive with suggestions from the Policy Development Scrutiny Committee. Questionnaires, the Council's website, Hertfordshire Citizens' Panel, focus and discussion groups and a staff survey had been used in the research.

A presentation was made to the Committee on the key findings and trends. The public had asked in particular for more feedback when they did become involved with public consultation.

Members considered the findings of the research and ways to publicise Council activities more effectively including using Link magazine more and also information known about residents already to target publicity.

RESOLVED - that the Executive be informed that the Policy Development Scrutiny Committee has the following comments on the development of a public engagement strategy:-

ALC

- (A) more use should be made of Link magazine to publicise Council activities and to seek residents' views; and
- (B) welcomes the development of Customer Relation Management (CRM) which will mean residents get questions answered informatively quicker.

274 HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY 2004

The Executive Member (for Community) submitted a report on the Housing Needs Survey. Consultants had been conducting a survey on housing needs and an executive summary of their findings had been circulated with the report before the Committee.

ACTION

Government guidance required local authorities to assess housing needs regularly as East Herts Council had since 1996.

The assessment needed to include a well-evidenced definition of affordable housing, identify details of affordable housing needed, identify all housing needs including that for special needs groups, ethnic minorities and keyworkers. This information would help to prioritise investment decisions, co-ordinate housing and community care strategies and be used for planning affordable housing and in drawing up development briefs. Members considered the report and asked questions concerning reuse of properties adapted for people with disabilities, providing smaller homes for elderly people in large houses, giving planning guidance on affordable housing and meeting the need for smaller homes in rural areas as well as provision for travellers. It was noted that the analysis did not take into account the planned forward programme of affordable house provision.

RESOLVED - that the Executive be informed that the Policy Development Scrutiny considers:

ALC

- (A) whilst smaller units are a priority they should only be provided as part of a mix of housing;
- (B) the figure of 40% affordable housing on all developments could only be achieved in the medium term rather than the immediate because of the high price of land already acquired for development;
- (C) working with Papworth Trust on ensuring housing adapted for people with disabilities was used by others with disabilities when they moved on be encouraged; and
- (D) the need to retain smaller houses in rural areas be addressed through planning guidelines.

ACTION

275 FORWARD PLAN FOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee Chairman submitted a Forward Plan for the work of the Committee. He pointed out that the further report on licensing should be included in the plan for the November meeting.

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

The meeting closed at 9.50 pm.

Chairman
Date