

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
POLICY DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL  
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD  
ON THURSDAY, 10 FEBRUARY 2005

PRESENT: Councillor J O Ranger (Chairman).  
Councillors K A Barnes, E J Cain, R N Copping,  
A D Dodd, Mrs M H Goldspink, D E Mayes  
D Richards and N Wilson.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillors A P Jackson and M J Tindale.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Linda Bevan	- Committee Secretary
Simon Chancellor	- Head of Accountancy Services
Mary Orton	- Assistant Director (Policy and Performance)
Brian Thomsett	- Head of Environmental Planning
David Tweedie	- Assistant Director (Financial Services)

574 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of  
Councillors G Francis, Mrs D L E Hollebon, G McAndrew  
and T K Robertson.

RECOMMENDED ITEM

ACTION

575 REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY SCRUTINY PANEL

**The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) Scrutiny Panel  
had been set up to scrutinise the RSS in detail and**

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**make recommendations to the Policy Development Scrutiny Committee.**

**The Chairman and Assistant Director (Policy and Performance) reported that the Panel had considered key issues in the RSS relating to East Herts. The third meeting of the Panel had been cancelled, but the Panel hoped to meet again and report direct to the special meetings of the Executive and Council to be held to consider the East of England Plan on 9 March 2005. The Committee agreed to recommend this course of action.**

**RECOMMENDED - that the RSS Scrutiny Panel's comments on the East of England Plan be reported direct to the Executive and Council.**

**APP/ALC**

RESOLVED ITEMS576 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2005 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the inclusion of Councillor Dodd's apology for absence.

577 EAST HERTS COUNCIL LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

A report was submitted by the Assistant Director (Policy and Performance) on the Local Development Scheme (LDS). This set out the timetable and programme for the future production of new planning documents required by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Forward planning documents which would be produced by East Herts Council, would include the Local Plan Second Review which was currently in progress, and the new Development Plan Documents, which would not start until 2006.

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The LDS listed Supplementary Planning Guidance and, in future, would contain details of Supplementary Planning Documents which would take their place.

The Local Development Documents together with the Regional Spatial Strategy (East of England Plan) would form the statutory development plan for East Herts.

The new system aimed to give more community and stakeholder involvement.

Informal consultation had taken place on the LDS and the document was submitted to the Committee for its comments.

Members considered the document and noted some of the consultation periods were between December and February, which they recommended should be changed or extended because the Christmas and New Year period interfered with consultations at this time of the year. They strongly supported the community involvement required by the new system.

Members thought a guidance note should be provided for parishes with advice on carrying out parish plans and preliminary work for them to meet the new requirements.

RESOLVED - that the Executive be informed that the Policy Development Scrutiny Committee considers (A) consultation periods during December to February in the LDS should be changed or extended;

APP/ALC

(B) the community involvement in the LDS be commended; and

(C) a guidance note on preparation of parish plans should be produced.

ACTION578 BUDGET SCRUTINY PANEL

Members considered the comments of the Budget Scrutiny Panel on the Council's budget for 2005/06.

The Panel had been set up to scrutinise in detail, the Council's budget proposals for 2005/06 and to make recommendations to the Policy Development Scrutiny Committee.

Members agreed with the Panel's recommendations on the format of the report on capital projects for next year, a cycle path in Bishop's Stortford, long term charging for car parking, CCTV, arts award, twitchells, recycling plastic and glass and bottles, the appointment of a Scrutiny Support Officer and funding of Next Step. However, the Committee felt that the efficiency saving of housing and community grant should not be removed from the budget in full. The Executive should instead be asked to ensure that new grant arrangements should be handled with sensitivity and the efficiency saving be amended accordingly.

In addition, the Committee thought it should be made clear that the provision of £80,000 for recycling included plastic recycling at "bring sites" and some glass and bottle collection at kerbsides.

On the feasibility study for an eco-house, the Committee agreed that the Energy Efficiency Panel should be asked to consider this at its next meeting with a view to encouraging developers to provide or contribute to the project. Moreover, it thought a budget of £5,000 for each scrutiny committee should be added to the provision for a Scrutiny Support Officer to cover costs for visits and expert witnesses.

The Executive Member for Finance emphasised the need to justify growth or savings items clearly and with reasoned argument. Members felt this would be part of the work of the Panel in future. The role it had suggested for itself in

ACTION

shadowing the budget process and their training and plans for a work programme were endorsed, subject to the overall review of the Council's scrutiny arrangements.

RESOLVED - that the Executive be informed that the Policy Development Scrutiny Committee (A) has the following comments on the Council's budget:

AFS/ALC

- (i) ongoing revenue costs to be shown in a separate column where new capital projects were shown in future;
- (ii) consideration be given to a cycle path across the town meads in Bishop's Stortford as part of the review of transportation being undertaken by consultants;
- (iii) a long term charging strategy be considered for car parking;
- (iv) consideration be given to increasing CCTV coverage - increase revenue growth to £55,000, and including an additional capital provision as appropriate;
- (v) the arts award be increased to £12,500;
- (vi) £5,000 be added for cleaning of footpaths in towns, ie twitchells;
- (vii) funding of £40,000 for Next Step should be continued;
- (viii) a provision for recycling for plastic (at bring sites) and glass and bottles (at kerbsides) of £80,000 be made (additional £35,000 net of waste efficiency grant);
- (ix) £35,000 be added for the appointment of a Scrutiny Support Officer;

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(x) £10,000 be added for the Scrutiny Committees to provide for costs of visits, expert witnesses etc;

(B) asks the Executive to ensure new grant arrangements are handled with sensitivity and efficiency savings be amended accordingly;

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(C) endorses the Panel's suggestion for its future role of shadowing the budget process at an earlier stage, and training on the financial model taking place at the next meeting when a work plan for the year would be agreed subject to the overall review of the Council's scrutiny arrangements.

579 DEVELOPMENT CONTROL IN RURAL AREAS

The Minutes of the Panel which had been set up to consider development control in rural areas were submitted to the Committee for approval. The Committee agreed with the Panel's recommendations that Development Control Committee should be asked to increase staff dealing with planning enforcement, give more delegation to officers where there were clear precedents and endorse the production of guidance notes on household extensions, farm diversification, outbuildings and barn conversions by the end of December 2005.

RESOLVED - that the Executive be requested to ask the Development Control Committee to (A) increase staff dealing with planning enforcement;

ADC/ALC

(B) give more delegation to officers where there were clear precedents; and

(C) endorse the production of guidance notes on household extensions, farm diversification, outbuildings and barn conversions by the end of December 2005.

ACTION580 FORWARD PLAN FOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee Chairman submitted a Forward Plan for the work of the Committee.

The Chairman explained that “rural proofing/proofing for the elderly of the Council’s policies” would involve checking that all the Council’s policies address the needs of rural areas and the elderly.

The Committee supported the proposed Forward Plan.

RESOLVED - that the Forward Plan for Policy Development Scrutiny Committee, as set out in the appendix to the report now submitted, be approved.

The meeting closed at 9.45 pm.