

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
 PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY
 COMMITTEE HELD IN THE
 WAYTEMORE ROOM, BISHOP'S
 STORTFORD ON THURSDAY,
8 DECEMBER 2005 AT 7.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs D L E Hollebon (Chairman).
 Councillors P R Ballam, H G S Banks, L R Pinnell,
 J O Ranger.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Philip Thomas	- Interim Executive Director
Claire Bennett	- Housing Strategy and Policy Officer
Linda Bevan	- Committee Secretary
Dave Cooper	- Performance Officer
Simon Drinkwater	- Director of Corporate Governance
Elizabeth Foy	- Housing Options Manager
Neal Hodgson	- Director of Regulatory Services
Mary Orton	- Director of Policy and Performance
Ceridwen Pettit	- Head of Performance
Jackie Sayers	- Scrutiny Officer
Jan Spong	- Head of Community Protection
Will O'Neill	- Head of Community Planning
Georgina Stanton	- Director of Organisational Development
Dave Tweedie	- Director of Resources

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

- | | |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| Jules Bickers | - Circle Anglia Housing Association |
| Steve Henning | - Riversmead Housing Association |

507 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors S A Bull, R Gilbert, A Graham, Mrs S Newton, D E Mayes and D Richards.

508 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairman welcomed staff new to the Committee and visitors from organisations outside the District Council.

RESOLVED ITEMSACTION509 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meetings held on 27 September and 19 October 2005 be confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

510 HOUSING PERFORMANCE: HOUSING STRATEGY ACTION PLAN, HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY ACTION PLAN, STOCK TRANSFER UNDERTAKING AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Head of Housing and Community Planning submitted a report on housing performance including the Housing Strategy Action Plan, Homelessness Strategy Action Plan, Stock Transfer Undertakings and Performance Indicators.

The Council had achieved "fit for purpose" status for its five year housing strategy for 2003/06. It had also produced a

ACTION

homelessness strategy and monitored its housing performance against a range of national and locally adopted indicators.

The Head of Housing and Community Planning explained that the majority of actions in the plans had been achieved and the undertakings which had been part of the housing stock transfer were progressing well.

Details of the actions which had not been achieved were given.

Members considered the report and raised questions on a number of items. In response to these it was explained that other opportunities were being pursued to proceed with the zero fossil fuel, modern method of construction project.

Mr Henning and Mr Bickers explained that their associations ensured tenants nominated by the Council received a fair proportion of more desirable properties and the associations were seeking to make the best use of stock in allocations to disabled people.

The sale of one of the hostels for the homeless was proceeding and Members were assured that provision for "rough sleepers" was given suitable priority although the district had a relatively small number of these cases.

The Head of Housing and Community Planning agreed to let Members of the Committee have details of the key worker accommodation which would be completed this year.

DPP

He added that the District Council had been successful in a bid for funding for developing a choice based letting scheme and he would be reporting on this to a future meeting.

DPP

In bringing empty properties back into use the Council sought to use negotiation rather than legal action and

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targets should be achieved this year.

Members agreed that the report should be received.

RESOLVED - that the report be received.

511 CPA IMPROVEMENT PLAN (1 APRIL - 30 SEPTEMBER 2005)

The Director of Policy and Performance submitted a report detailing the six monthly progress on the implementation of the CPA Improvement Plan and seeking agreement to the revised/additional actions. Following a CPA inspection, an authority had a duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement.

It was noted that of the 76 actions identified: 80% had been achieved or were on target, 4% had had their target revised, 16% had no commentary.

A Member asked questions on the team briefing system and was assured that valuable feedback from staff was received. He also queried plans for performance related pay and it was explained that the system of competencies for staff was being refined before this was introduced.

The Chairman drew attention to the training that would be available on scrutiny in the New Year and on the covalent system for monitoring progress on the Committee's services.

The Interim Executive Director (Head of Paid Service) suggested the reports on the CPA Improvement Plan should follow a more simplified, strategic format and Members concurred with this. They thought it would help Members make a more helpful contribution.

RESOLVED - that the progress report on the CPA Improvement Plan be presented in a more simplified and strategic format in future and revised targets be

ACTION

agreed.

512 STRATEGIC PLANS 2005/06 (1 APRIL TO
30 SEPTEMBER 2005)

The Director of Policy and Performance submitted a report on progress made in implementing the Strategic Plans for 2005/06.

Details of progress were given for each division. The Directors had attended to give more information on the plans for their divisions.

The Head of Performance suggested the report follow a clearer format in future by grouping actions which were achieved, on target or revised and Members concurred.

The Director of Organisational Development reported that the Head of Business Solutions and IT Development had been appointed and would be reviewing the plan for Electronic Document Management. She also reported on work to merge Human Resources with Communications. Schemes for flexible working were being piloted in the Authority to bring the Council's Human Resource (HR) practices up to date.

The Director of Regulatory Services pointed out the improvement in enforcement action since an extra member of staff had been appointed.

A Member requested more information on informal discussions of planning applications for Ward Members and the Director agreed to look into this.

DRS

Other Members commented on the success of meetings on enhancing town centres and the need to seek help from Herts Highways with this.

The Director of Policy and Performance drew attention to the success of the transfer of leisure facilities and summer playschemes. Recycling was being expanded, final guidance

ACTION

on implementing the Cleaner Neighbourhoods Act was awaited and grass cutting had been improved.

The Director of Resources invited Members to try the benefit fraud quiz on the Council's intranet. He reported that the Government would be requiring the Council's accounts to be closed earlier next year than was the current practice next year.

The Director of Corporate Governance reported that the elections had run smoothly and had been risk assessed this year. The Council's Constitution was also under review.

The Director of Policy and Performance gave details on the consideration of the East of England Plan. A Member requested a report on the Local Strategic Partnership and the Director agreed to submit this to a future meeting.

DPP

The Director of Regulatory Services commented on changes in licensing, emergency planning and gambling laws which had affected his division. Members thought the review process for licensing should be publicised now that a number of licences had been issued.

Members agreed to congratulate the officers on the progress on strategic plans.

RESOLVED - that the Executive be informed that the Performance Scrutiny Committee considers that

(A) the progress on Strategic Plans be noted and officers be congratulated on it;

(B) for future reports, actions be grouped under the headings of achieved, on target or revised;

DPP

(C) revised completion dates for actions in the Strategic Plans 2005/06 be agreed; and

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(D) the review process for licensing decisions be advertised in "Link".

DR/DOD

513 WORKING GROUP - CHALLENGING THE ROLE OF THE SAFETY ADVISORY TEAM (SAT)

The Working Group on the Safety Advisory Team submitted a report on the work of the group set up to challenge the role of the Safety Advisory Team (SAT). Councillor Ballam attended to explain the findings of the group. She added that the group had been set up in response to feelings that a less restrictive system was needed by organisers of local events. The Group had found the advantages of the Safety Advisory Team were that it was a multi agency team which could offer advice to event organisers and had produced the "Guide to Safe and Successful Events". The SAT had streamlined its system and documentation. It was felt it could be a service that organisers would wish to use and should be kept. The workshop for organisers on organising events had received positive feedback and it was hoped it would be repeated.

The Working Group had consulted on whether organisers were aware of the SAT which they were. It also examined how arrangements compared with other authorities which was difficult to tell although it was clear that officers did share good practice.

A Member raised problems of finding suitable people to put up road signs for events. This was a requirement of Herts Highways and the Police.

Members agreed to endorse the findings of the Working Group.

RESOLVED - that the findings of the Working Group on the Safety Advisory Team that the SAT should be retained be endorsed.

514 WORK PROGRAMME

ACTION

The Director of Policy and Performance submitted a report detailing the future business to be determined by the Performance Scrutiny Committee. Extra meetings of the Committee had been arranged and additional items for the work programme would be discussed at the next meeting.

Councillor Ranger invited Members to join him on a visit to a large development by the Group that had taken over the Council's leisure facilities. Details would be circulated to all Members of the Committee.

DPP

RESOLVED - that the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm.