

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

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs D L E Hollebon (Chairman),
Councillors H G S Banks, S A Bull, A D Dodd,
L R Pinnell, D Richards

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor R L Parker	- East Herts Council
Simon Parkinson	- Aspire Leisure
Michelle Davies	- Aspire Leisure

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Committee Secretary
Dave Cooper	- Performance Officer
Alaine Clarke	- Research and Information Officer
Martyn Dutfield	- Head of Leisure
Simon Drinkwater	- Director of Corporate Governance
Neal Hodgson	- Director of Regulatory Services
Dave McRobbie	- Head of Customer Relations
Mary Orton	- Director of Policy and Performance
Jackie Sayers	- Scrutiny Officer

522 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors
P R Ballam, R Gilbert, Mrs S Newton, J O Ranger and
J P Warren.

523 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman asked Members to be aware of an additional and provisional date for Performance Scrutiny Committee on 10 May, 2006.

The Chairman wished everyone a Happy Christmas and a healthy New Year.

RESOLVED ITEMSACTION524 STRATEGIC RISKS MONITORING REPORT

The Director of Corporate Governance submitted a report concerning the action to be taken to mitigate and control risks tracked by strategic risk registers during the periods 1 April to 30 June and 1 July to 30 September, 2005.

The background to the development of the Strategic Risk Register was explained. The report now submitted explained the process of risk management and opportunities to create an environment of "no surprises" which would place the Council in a stronger position to deliver services in line with its corporate priorities and by managing opportunities. The ratings of the potential impact on the business and its possible likelihood of an event happening without controls being in place, was explained.

It was noted that progress of implementing planned mitigating actions was being monitored through Covalent.

Of the total 24 strategic risk registers, planned action had been achieved for 23 of the risks registered. The action not achieved related to the signing of the Leisure Contract and the installation of the new IT system (SRB11h). It was noted however, that the contract with Aspire had now been signed and exchanged.

It was also noted that action SRB11d (Major Officer Restructuring) also needed to be amended by the Interim Executive Director and Director of Corporate Governance

to reflect the changing nature of the risk and methods of control. It was anticipated that the amended register should be submitted to Directors' Board on 3 January 2006 with progress being reported back to Performance Scrutiny Committee at some point in February 2006.

RESOLVED – that (A) the progress in taking action to mitigate and control risks tracked by strategic risk registers 2005 be noted;

(B) the report be referred to the Executive on 10 January 2006;

DCG

(C) SRB11d (Major Officer Restructuring) be amended by the Interim Executive Director and Director of Corporate Governance to reflect the changing nature of risks and methods of control and the amended register be submitted to Directors' Board on 3 January 2006; and

IED/DCG

(D) 2006/07 strategic risk registers be prepared in full compliance with the Risk Management Strategy as approved by the Executive on 8 November, 2005.

525 PRESENTATION BY ENFIELD LEISURE

Simon Parkinson, Managing Director of Aspire gave a short presentation concerning the performance of the Leisure contract. He stated that the Contract between Aspire and East Herts had now been signed and the documents exchanged.

He commented that he was happy with the partnership and performance over the last six months and was pleased with the partnership which had developed between officers and members.

Very little had changed in terms of what Aspire had done from a staff perspective. It was noted new uniforms had been provided and ways of working. He stressed that he wanted to work with staff, introducing new systems and

procedures.

Mr Parkinson commented that there was an intention to brand market the gym facilities and new IT facilities.

The first six months had recorded a drop off in terms of attendance because of increased local competition (especially in Bishop's Stortford) and an upheaval of services. The key period would be the next six months, in terms of pushing to increase membership at all sites and to pick up on casual swimming. The possibility of introducing swimming galas was discussed.

Clarification was sought and provided on the issue of reducing costs within the terms of the contract; the relationship of shared ownership (ie of Leventhorpe) and its promotion.

The highly competitive market in terms of health and fitness in Bishop's Stortford was noted and of people who had taken to walking in groups.

The pension arrangements in relation to new and existing staff was noted. (Following the subsequent receipt of a letter from Mr Parkinson dated 5 January 2006, it was noted that new Aspire employees were now able to join the Local Government Pension Scheme).

Councillor R L Parker commented that the contract was still in its early days and expressed a wish to continue to carry out personal visits to the swimming pools.

The invitation to review the swimming pools was extended to Members of Performance Scrutiny Committee.

The Chairman, on behalf of Members, thanked Mr Parkinson and Ms Davies for the presentation.

RESOLVED – that (A) the presentation be received;
and

(B) the Head of Leisure organise a tour of the Swimming Pool for Members of the Performance Scrutiny Committee in the summer of 2006.

DDCS

526 PERFORMANCE MONITORING OF LEISURE CONTRACT

The Director of Policy and Performance submitted a report which detailed the first quarter's trading (4 July to 30 September, 2005) of East Herts' leisure facilities by the new management contractor, Aspire.

The background as to how the review was undertaken was set out in the report and of the initiatives being developed in relation to:-

- Service delivery
- Marketing
- Health and safety
- Throughputs

It was acknowledged that the process for monitoring the contract was undergoing subtle changes and that this was being managed in partnership with Aspire. In the short term, Aspire inputs would be linked to outputs in terms of service delivery. The longer term objectives would monitor Aspire's performance in meeting overall strategic objectives of importance to the Council. These were set out in the report, now submitted.

An explanation of what was being monitored and how, was provided by the Head of Leisure.

ACTION

In the main, Aspire considered that their overall financial performance for the first quarter was reasonable, notwithstanding a reduction in both casual swimming and gym attendances during the period. This was not viewed as a problem given their significant investment proposals and detailed marketing plan to reverse the decline in the New Year.

It was noted that there had been no progress in relation to identifying the funding of any potential loss of revenue claims which may be submitted by Aspire at a future date.

The issue of casual swimming was discussed. It was noted that there had only been a small reduction this year in the amount of casual swimming slots available. Some refurbishment works had impacted on customer usage.

Problems of litter around swimming pools was discussed. It was hoped that the issue of litter could be raised with the Headmaster of Leventhorpe School.

DDCS

At the request of a Member, Mr Parkinson commented that he would be prepared to make a presentation at some future point, to various Community Voice meetings promoting swimming pools in the area.

Mr Parkinson was confident that there were no major problems. It was acknowledged that there was a need to compete more in the health and fitness market.

The Chairman, on behalf of Members, thanked all concerned for the smooth transfer of leisure management. It was hoped that Officers could arrange a visit to the swimming pools next year.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

ACTION527 BEST VALUE REVIEW ACTION PLANS MONITORING REPORT (1 APRIL – 30 SEPTEMBER, 2005)

The Director of Policy and Performance submitted a report concerning the progress made in implementing the Action Plans as a result of the Best Value Reviews in relation to Customer Relations, Organisational Development, Environmental Stewardship, Development Control, Health and Living Support and the Leisure and Recreation Services Improvement Plan.

It was noted that, as the review of Customer Relations had only two actions outstanding which could be subsumed into the relevant Service Plans, officers felt that this action plan should no longer be formally reported.

The progress for each of the reviews was detailed in the report, now submitted.

It was noted that in relation to ES2 (Develop an East Herts Energy Strategy), the issue would not be reported to Policy Development Scrutiny Committee in January 2006 owing to the need to convene another meeting of the Energy Efficiency Scrutiny Panel. It was anticipated the matter would be reported to Policy Development Scrutiny Committee shortly thereafter.

It was noted that the comments in the last column in relation to ES5 (Establish a forum of local / statutory groups etc) should be ignored.

Members commented on the improved standard of street cleansing and weed removal. Concerns were expressed in relation to Bell Street, Sayesbury Manor and Apton Road.

The Director of Policy and Performance requested Members to advise her if there were any particular areas within their wards which required specific attention.

ACTION

Members acknowledged the efforts made in relation to the environment generally, and sought clarification on how the urban and rural environment was being tackled. The staffing implications were acknowledged in terms of officer resources.

Members sought clarification on the Dial a Ride service and requested an update at a future meeting of Performance Scrutiny Committee. The Director of Policy and Performance commented on the strong interest in providing and running a community transport system.

RESOLVED – that (A) the report be received; and

(B) the Director of Policy and Performance provide an update in relation to the Dial a Ride service to Performance Scrutiny Committee.

DPP

528 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS – QUARTERLY MONITORING (JULY – SEPTEMBER, 2005)

The Director of Policy and Performance submitted a report detailing performance statistics for the period July – September, 2005 for the Council's national and local performance indicators.

It was noted that of the 25 indicators (and sub parts):-

- 64% were on or above target
- 12% were between 1-5% off target
- 24% were 6% or more off target

The following indicators were 6% or more off target:-

LPI 2.2 – missed collections per 100,000 collections of household waste

ACTION

LPI 2.9 – Average building regulations plan check turnaround time.

LPI 2.10 – Percentage of building site re-inspected within 3 months

BV 78b – Average time for processing notifications of changes in circumstances

LPI 3.4 – Percentage of homelessness applications decided within 33 days.

BV 82a – Percentage of total tonnage household waste recycled

An explanation as to why the targets were off was provided.

The Director of Policy and Performance drew Members' attention to BV82a. She explained that this was showing red on a "technicality" in that this was on target, but monitoring software was not able yet to reflect the correct position, on a month by month target basis.

Clarification was sought on the amount of Council Tax collected and the reinstatement of brown bin collections. A Member requested that Officers investigate the possibility of brown bin collections being carried out on a monthly basis, during the winter months where there was a demand. The Director of Policy and Performance undertook to look into this.

RESOLVED – that (A) the report be noted; and

(B) the Director of Policy and Performance report back on the feasibility of introducing a brown bin collection service on a monthly basis, until Spring.

DDCS

ACTION

529 . WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Officer drew Members' attention to the provisional date for a meeting to be held on 10 May 2006.

Members sought clarification on the establishment of an Audit Committee. It was noted that a report would be prepared for Members' consideration.

DPP

RESOLVED - that the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm.

Chairman
Date