

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
POLICY DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL  
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD  
ON TUESDAY, 22 AUGUST 2006

PRESENT: Councillor J O Ranger (Chairman).  
Councillors H G S Banks, R N Copping,  
A F Dearman, A D Dodd, J Mayes, G McAndrew,  
D Richards and J D Thornton.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor P R Ballam, T Milner, P A Ruffles,  
J P Warren.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Anne Fisher	- Chief Executive
Linda Bevan	- Committee Secretary
Pippa Brent-Isherwood	- Community Projects Team Manager
Simon Drinkwater	- Director of Corporate Governance
Will O'Neill	- Head of Community Planning and Housing
Ceri Pettit	- Head of Performance
Jackie Sayers	- Scrutiny Officer

175 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of  
Councillors Mrs M H Goldspink, L O Haysey and  
Mrs D L E Hollebon.

176 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman announced that a Committee of the  
Executive was being created to deal with the provision of  
leisure services and if Members wished to comment or

know more detail they should attend the next meeting of the Executive.

### RESOLVED ITEMS

### ACTION

#### 177 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 7 and 14 June 2006 be confirmed as correct records.

#### 178 WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2006/07

The Chief Executive submitted a report on the work programme for 2006/07 to support the Committee in planning its work.

A number of items had been suggested for discussion and sub-groups set up to consider issues in detail. The Scrutiny Officer pointed out that Performance Scrutiny Committee would consider the Youth Strategy. Tendering policy would be considered by the Policy Development Scrutiny Committee as part of a report on financial regulations which would be brought to the Committee in December 2006.

RESOLVED - that the Committee's work programme as circulated at the meeting be agreed subject to the deletion and addition discussed.

#### 179 HEALTH SCRUTINY OPTIONS

The Chief Executive submitted a report on consultation from Hertfordshire County Council on future health scrutiny arrangements.

The right and duty to scrutinise health services rested with Hertfordshire County Council which had set up joint committees in the past to involve District Councils. District Councils had sought to challenge and influence local health services. The County Council Committee for health scrutiny also included five co-opted District Councillors

ACTION

although none of these came from East Herts Council. There were also patient and public involvement forums. The County Council had decided on a new approach to health scrutiny to focus on specific elements of health issues. The County Council wanted to continue and develop the contribution made at district level. Several options for this were suggested and the County Council preferred a combination of co-opting District Councillors onto Hertfordshire County Council Health Topic Groups and commissioning joint County/ District Task and Finish Groups (Option C).

The Committee noted the comments of Members who had been involved in health scrutiny. They attended the meeting and stated that they felt there had been some benefits where Members had been involved in task and finish groups and had dealt with specific issues of local concern eg late night pharmacies, transport for medical visits, dental treatment. They thought it was important to keep local involvement with health provision through local forums of some sort.

The Committee commented that Members could influence health provision through scrutiny and wanted to be able to request that certain issues be discussed by Task and Finish Groups or decline involvement where issues were not a priority for the area.

The Executive Member for Public Engagement emphasised the role of Members in influencing decisions particularly through the Local Strategic Partnership.

RESOLVED - that the Committee recommends to the Executive that the Executive Member for Public Engagement responds to the Leader of Hertfordshire County Council, regarding potential health scrutiny arrangements, endorsing Option C as set out in the report before the Committee and requesting that District Councillors be allowed to ask for specific Task and Finish Groups to be set up or not if the issue is not felt to be of sufficient local importance.

ACTION180 EAST HERTS CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN

A report was submitted seeking the Committee's endorsement of the East Herts Children and Young People's Plan 2006-07. This matter would be considered by the Executive as a key decision.

The County Council had the main responsibility for this area of work and had produced a Children and Young People's Plan. The plan now submitted was a district level version of this.

Further work would be carried out to set targets. Many of the targets had to be carried out locally and this work would help with the allocation of resources. The plan covered services for all children and young people up to 19 years old (or 25 years for those with learning difficulties).

The plan addressed the five outcomes set out by the Government for youth:

- be healthy
- stay safe
- enjoy and achieve
- make a positive contribution
- achieve economic well-being

The plan also complied with relevant legislation.

The Committee commented that there was a role in delivering the plan for Members who also served as school governors and could influence partners. Different issues would be of importance for East Herts compared to those of importance in other parts of the County.

ACTION

The Committee noted that this plan was a transitional measure only. Members queried their ability to affect youth issues further but were reassured that they had a role in influencing events through providing evidence of needs and lobbying for action. There was also an option to provide subsidies for activities where they thought this appropriate. Members could provide community leadership and influence their partners.

It was noted some worthwhile activities were already provided with regards to youth eg Youth Council, Youth Conference, special projects, play schemes.

RESOLVED - that the Executive be informed that (A) the East Herts Children and Young People's Plan 2006-2007 should be endorsed as an appropriate plan to service this transitional year; and

DPP

(B) a more targeted approach should be adopted once more detailed knowledge and statistics were available which would allow East Herts Council to bring its influence to bear on youth issues.

181 EAST HERTS CPA IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Chief Executive submitted a report on the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) Improvement Plan for East Herts Council. This matter would be considered by the Executive as a key decision. The Plan had been revised following the Authority's recent use of resources and direction of travel results for 2005/06. The publication of the new District Council CPA framework and in the light of the Chief Executive's aim to create an excellent first class Council.

A new framework had been devised for CPA which meant that, as a "good" Council, East Herts would be unlikely to be considered for reassessment until 2007/08.

The Plan would be monitored by the Performance Scrutiny

ACTION

Committee but priorities would be set during the budget process which would be scrutinised by the Policy Development Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee supported the Plan subject to the addition of notes to show where Member are particularly involved eg in deciding priorities and the Members' wish to improve leisure facilities.

RESOLVED - that the Executive be informed that  
(A) the Committee considers the revised CPA Improvement Plan should be approved subject to the addition of notes to show Member involvement and their wish to improve leisure facilities; and

CE

(B) the proposal for six monthly monitoring reports to be considered by Performance Scrutiny Committee should be supported.

## 182 IMPLEMENTING A CHOICE BASED LETTINGS SCHEME IN EAST HERTS

The Executive Member for Community Development submitted a report on Choice Based Lettings. This would give more choice of type and location of property to the tenants. Properties would be advertised and applicants would be able to express an interest in them. This matter would be considered by the Executive as a key decision.

A consortium of Hertfordshire and Essex local authorities and registered social landlords had been formed to start the scheme. Funding had been received towards it from central government. This would be matched by contributions from members of the consortium.

The Committee noted that an important part of the scheme would be to ensure vulnerable households, particularly in rural areas, understood how to take advantage of the new scheme.

ACTION

A tender for the scheme needed to be awarded before Christmas 2006.

A summary of the costs was attached to the report now submitted. Costs were high but choice based lettings would be a government requirement by 2010 and East Herts Council would benefit from sub-regional working on the project.

The Head of Housing and Community Planning explained that the scheme would be more open and transparent than present arrangements. He commented that expectations of tenants could be managed as they would see how many properties were available, how many points were needed to gain the tenancy of them and how many points the person who gained the tenancy had. The level of need for housing was more important than the length of time people had waited to obtain a tenancy although some points were awarded during the waiting period. The list of properties would be updated regularly and be made widely available including on the internet. Tenders would be approved by all members of the consortium. Training would be provided on the scheme for Members to help them deal with enquiries from residents when it was introduced. Similar schemes had been introduced elsewhere and had been successful.

Members expressed concern that tenants' expectations would be raised unrealistically as there would still be few properties available. They asked to review the housing points system when the scheme was considered further by the Committee. They also wished to invite officers or Members from a nearby authority operating the scheme to that meeting to hear their views on it and to meet a representative of the company who had won the tender before the Council approved the final agreement.

RESOLVED - that the Executive be informed that the Committee considers that (A) the principle of developing a choice based letting scheme as the process for allocating available homes to applicants

DPP

ACTION

be agreed;

(B) the scope of the work required, a proposed timetable and the key tasks that would need to be undertaken should be approved and officers should be given delegation to work on the detail of the scheme;

DPP

(C) authority should be given for the Council, as part of the consortium, to proceed to tender for a supplier to manage the choice based letting scheme, with the results of the tender exercise reported back to the Executive at a future meeting for approval;

DPP

(D) the Director of Policy and Performance should be asked to review current service processes to identify efficiency savings in order to release resources within existing service budgets to compensate for the increased revenue cost associated with the introduction of choice based lettings; and

DPP

(E) the scheme be considered by the Policy Development Scrutiny Committee further as it develops.

### 183 REPORT OF LONG TERM LEISURE WORKING GROUP

The Executive Member for Community Development submitted a report which summarised the investigation and conclusions of the Member/Officer Group which had considered the long term plans for the Council's leisure facilities. This matter would be considered by the Executive as a key decision.

The Committee had considered this at a previous meeting and noted that its comments had been taken on board.



ACTION

RESOLVED - that the Executive be informed the Committee considers the recommendations of the Member/Officer Working Group on the Council's long term leisure strategy, as set out in the report now submitted, should be approved.

The meeting closed at 9.20 pm.

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