

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE WAYTEMORE ROOM,
BISHOP'S STORTFORD, ON TUESDAY
27 FEBRUARY 2007 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, D Richards and N Wilson.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

East Herts Council

Councillor A P Jackson

Stevenage Leisure Limited

Geoff Caine
John Dyson
Roz Hawkes

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Anne Freimanis	- Chief Executive
Lorraine Blackburn	- Committee Secretary
Karl Chui	- Trainee Performance Officer
Simon Drinkwater	- Director of Neighbourhood Services
Martyn Duffield	- Head of Leisure
Mary Orton	- Director of Customer and Community Services
Ceri Pettit	- Head of Performance
Jackie Sayers	- Scrutiny Officer
Dave Tweedie	- Director of Resources

ACTION613 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors D R Atkins, S A Bull, A L Burlton and A D Dodd.

614 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Geoff Caine, John Dyson and Roz Hawkes from Stevenage Leisure Limited to the meeting to hear their presentation.

The Chairman thanked the Vice Chairman, Councillor Diana Richards for chairing the meeting on 15 February 2007. She could not attend that meeting and had declared an interest by virtue of the fact that she paid subscriptions to the Thorley Residents Association. She commented that it was an opportunity for all to make scrutiny work for residents. The Chairman commented that she had heard that it was an "excellent" meeting and thanked Councillor Diana Richards.

With the consent of the Chairman, Councillor A P Jackson commented that he had received an email from a member of the public congratulating the Council on its innovative step of taking scrutiny into the community.

The Chairman commented that with the consent of Members, agenda item 12 (Corporate Healthcheck) would be considered after agenda item 8 (Joint Provision Pool Programming and Swimming).

615 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman commented that if there was any debate in relation to Minute 621 Corporate Healthcheck and SR25 (Rhodes Arts Complex) she would declare a personal and prejudicial interest by virtue of the fact that she was a Trustee of the Rhodes Arts Complex.

Councillor L R Pinnell said the same would apply to him.

ACTION616 STEVENAGE LEISURE LIMITED - PRESENTATION

Senior representatives of Stevenage Leisure Limited were in attendance to explain the company's structure and background. A new Contract Manager had been appointed and improvements in provision explained. Mr Caine commented that the takeover from Aspire had been difficult but that Stevenage Leisure Limited (SLL) continued to work in partnership with East Herts Council to provide a continuously improving level of leisure provision and to improve financial returns within the confines of the short term contract.

Clarification was provided in relation to the operation of dual ownership of pools and their management. SLL were happy to work with the Council in relation to resolving management issues.

SLL commented that in relation to staff relationships and those who had been transferred under TUPE, staff had been concerned about future employment and felt neglected. There was now a feeling of stability and staff were positive about changes being introduced. Councillor A P Jackson commented that staff relationships had been handled very well. The Council was keen to provide whatever support was necessary to enable SLL to be able to manage the contract successfully.

In terms of "quick fixes" SLL had tried to focus on customer services and keeping the facilities clean. It was noted that a lot had been spent on providing basic requirements, such as light bulbs.

The Chairman on behalf of Members, thanked SLL for their presentation and requested that they be invited back in the future to provide a further update.

ACTIONRESOLVED ITEMSACTION617 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2007 were submitted. Councillor L R Pinnell requested that his attendance be recorded and the Minutes amended accordingly.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting of Performance Scrutiny Committee held on 15 February 2007, as amended, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

618 LEISURE CENTRE CONTRACT – MONITORING REPORT

The Director of Customer and Community Services submitted a report which provided a new performance monitoring framework in order to monitor the performance of the five facilities now managed by Stevenage Leisure Limited (SLL).

Clarification was provided in relation to:-

- Covering any gaps in the service; and
- The cost of providing subsidised swimming.

It was noted that a more accurate assessment of how things were progressing could be provided in six months time as the contract now only covered a three month period.

RESOLVED – that the new performance monitoring framework be approved with effect from the financial year 2007/08.

619 LEISURE CENTRE CONTRACT MONITORING PERFORMANCE OCTOBER 2006 – DECEMBER 2006

ACTION

The Head of Leisure submitted a report detailing how the existing leisure management contract with Stevenage Leisure Limited was performing and that future reports to Performance Scrutiny Committee would focus on key indicators. It was noted that SLL had spent the first four months of the contract addressing various issues arising from the previous contact, including outstanding maintenance, staffing issues and service pricing.

The report reviewed:

- Attendance figures across all pools and by individual pool;
- Income across all pools and by individual pool;
- Cost subsidy;
- Expenditure incurred by key areas;
- Variation against target for the year across all pools and by individual pool against key indicators;
- Levels of customer satisfaction;
- Year on year comparison across all pools and by individual pool with trend analysis;
- Areas of concern; and
- Service developments and initiatives.

The Head of Leisure commented that the cost subsidy element of the report was a “snap shot” in time. Casual swimming was in decline which was a national trend. It was noted that there was the possibility of approximately £45,000 being outstanding in utility charges not yet received for the period October to December 2006.

ACTION

Areas of particular concern included: the net expenditure to summary estimate for 2006/07 which was expected to exceed revised estimates by up to £120,000 for which provision had been made; and further developments relating to marketing the facilities.

The impact of reduced direct debiting mandates was explained. A new IT system had been procured and the Council's IT section had been successful in getting a reduction in the licence transfer fee from £25,000 to no charge at all. Ward Freman would shortly be having a new disinfection system installed which may provide a revenue cost benefit to the Council.

In relation to the cost per swim, the Leader was keen for Officers to continue to look for opportunities to rationalise services. Updates were provided in relation to the purchase of inflatable equipment and works to the facilities at Hartham Pool.

A Member suggested closing the pools in November / December to carry out essential maintenance rather than during the periods of summer demand.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

620 JOINT PROVISION POOL PROGRAMMING AND SWIMMING TEACHER CONTINUITY

The Head of Leisure submitted a report following an earlier request from Members for an update on the programming elements relating to joint provision pools and service continuity in relation to swimming tuition.

A Member commented that from the information provided, Leventhorpe School gave the Council least use of the pool and yet it was the most expensive to run. It was noted that they offered more swimming lessons there than other pools and that club usage was also low. The Head of Leisure reminded Members that the Joint Provision Agreement was

ACTION

quite specific about hours of use on the three sites. A Member commented that there was a need to provide opening times which best met demand.

SLL commented that there were a lot of issues in relation to swimming provision at Hartham by swimming clubs which needed further thought.

In relation to teacher provision, it was noted that all teaching staff were properly qualified and went through a process of continuous professional development.

Members requested a further update later in the year.

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

(B) Members' comments be taken on board when reporting later in the year.

DCCS

621 CORPORATE HEALTHCHECK – QUARTERLY MONITORING (OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2006)

The Head of Performance submitted a report which set out, on an exception basis, issues relating to finance, performance and risk monitoring for East Herts Council for the period October – December 2006.

In terms of the revenue financial summary, it was noted that Leisure Contract variations had increased from £300,000 to £400,000 which would result in an overall General Fund overspend of just over £1million. This overspend had already been debated and approved by Council.

The report contained a breakdown of revenue and service information by each directorate. Explanations were provided for those indicators currently showing “red” and “amber” as follows:

- LPI2.2 No. of collections missed per 100,000 collections of household waste;

ACTION

- BV183b Length of stay in temporary accommodation (hostel);
- LPI 2.10 (3) – Percentage of Building Sites re-inspected in less than 3 months.

In relation to LPI2.2, a Member commented on the anomalies in relation to people not putting out their rubbish every week and how this could impact and could be construed as a “missed collection”. The fact that different items were collected within half an hour of one another could cause confusion. It was recognised that recycling was a priority for the public and Members recognised the effort on the part of Officers.

In relation to LPI 2.10 (3), Members recognised the heavy workload and sought assurances that the figures could be improved upon. The Director of Neighbourhood Services was confident that the situation could be improved and the target maintained.

Members queried the number of working days lost to sickness absence, the use of agency staff to cover maternity leave and its financial implications.

The Chief Executive provided clarification on the future approach to be taken in relation to vacant posts. Members were pleased to see the progress being made in relation to staffing.

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

(B) Members’ comments be noted.

622 2006/07 ESTIMATES AND FUTURE TARGETS

The Head of Performance submitted a report which set out performance indicators which the Council was required to monitor and publish annually in the Best Value Performance Plan (Corporate Strategic Plan), the estimated performance

ACTION

for 2006/07 including targets for the next three years.

Performance Scrutiny Committee provided the Performance Team with a steer in relation to targets and priorities as now detailed:-

RESOLVED – that (A) the Executive be recommended to approve the following amendments and comments:-

- BV64 (Vacant dwellings returned to occupation or demolished) - targets be amended for the years 2007 to 2010 as follows: 13 (2007/08), 14 (2008/09) and 15 (2009/2010).
- BV109a, b and c – (Processing time of major, minor and other applications). The Committee recommended that prioritisation be placed on meeting these targets at the detriment of other indicators in relation to BV219a, b and c in terms of conservation areas.
- LPI 2.23 (Planning Decisions Delegated). The target be amended to 90%. Additionally that a new indicator be created in respect of delegated decisions going to appeal.
- BV10 (Percentage of non-domestic rates collected). That this remain unchanged.
- BV183b – (Length of stay in temporary accommodation) (Hostels). Members noted the difficulty the service was having in managing this indicator in terms of the more complex cases that were being presented and the context of top quartile performance of zero weeks. Performance Scrutiny Committee proposed that the Council should continue with its current hostel accommodation policy and homeless prevention work (therefore accepting that until one of the Council's hostels is de-commissioned and the

ACTION

other is re-provided as a self-contained accommodation) top quartile performance was not achievable, and that realistic and achievable targets be set for future years.

- BV202 (Number of Rough Sleepers). That the figure be reported at between 0-10.
- BV199a (Local street and environmental cleanliness – litter and detritus). That a figure of 10% be sought.
- BV199b (Local street and environmental cleanliness – graffiti) and BV199c (Local street and environmental cleanliness – fly posting). The targets as detailed be supported.
- BV216b (Information on contaminated land). The targets as detailed be supported.
- BV217 (Pollution control improvements). The target of 95% be supported.
- LPI 2.1c - (Planning enforcement prosecutions). Members recommended that the annual targets for 2007/08 onwards be 6, 7 and 8 respectively.
- BV218a (Abandoned vehicles) and BV218b (Abandoned vehicles – removal). That i) targets focus on removing vehicles in 24 hours ii) that work continue to improve identification of abandoned vehicles and iii) officers increase emphasis on enforcement action.

(B) the ongoing anomalies appended to the report now submitted, be emailed to Members of Performance Scrutiny Committee.

CE

ACTION623 ANALYSIS OF 2005/06 QUARTILE INFORMATION

The Chief Executive submitted a report analysing the comparative position of the 2005/06 Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) based on data published by the Audit Commission on 15 December 2006. Comments were also sought on indicators which were considered a priority for improvement and to look at areas of underperformance. The Head of Performance commented that a column had been omitted showing quartile performance.

The Head of Performance commented that a pattern was emerging in terms of the Council staying in the middle range and making no significant progress. It appeared that other District Councils were moving forward faster. A Member commented that the figures appeared to show the Council “falling away” which needed to be brought to the attention of the Executive.

The point was made that the Council had now taken out the “easy wins” and ways of improving performance would become harder.

The Leader commented that the Council needed to refocus on its priorities and the extent to which it was prepared to make greater or lesser investment. There was also a need to raise aspirations in areas where there was a “relaxed view”.

RESOLVED – that (A) the report be noted;

(B) the falling figures be drawn to the attention of the Executive; and DCS

(C) the Executive be recommended to ensure that issues of top priority were given proper support. DCS

ACTION

624 DRAFT CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN 2007/08

The Chief Executive submitted a report introducing the draft format and content of the 2007/08 Corporate Strategic Plan. Members were requested to contact the Head of Performance directly with any comments or suggestions. It was noted that the final version of the Plan would be available in May 2007.

A Member requested that a reference to the introduction of Farmers' Markets in Hertford be incorporated into the draft plan.

RESOLVED – that (A) the draft Corporate Strategic Plan for 2007/08 be noted; and

(B) the Executive be requested to authorise the Chief Executive to amend and make any additional changes to the text or performance indicators as required and to publish the Corporate Strategic Plan post May 2007.

CE

625 WORK PROGRAMME

The Chief Executive submitted a report detailing the work of Performance Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the 2006/07 Civic Year.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 9.50 pm.

Chairman
Date