

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
POLICY DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL  
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD  
ON TUESDAY 21 AUGUST 2007 AT  
7.30 PM

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PRESENT: Councillor J O Ranger (Chairman).  
Councillors P R Ballam, Mrs R F Cheswright,  
D Clark, R N Copping, K Darby, A Dearman,  
A M Graham, J Mayes, C Woodward.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors N Clark, A D Dodd, Mrs D M Hone,  
R L Parker, M Wood.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Anne Freimanis	- Chief Executive
Jackie Bruce	- Service Development Officer
Cliff Cardoza	- Head of Environmental Services
Simon Drinkwater	- Director of Neighbourhood Services
Philip Hamberger	- Director of Internal Services
Martin Ibrahim	- Senior Democratic Services Officer
Jane O'Brien	- Empty Property Officer
Will O'Neill	- Head of Community and Cultural Services
Lois Prior	- Head of Strategic Direction (shared) and Communications Manager
George A Robertson	- Director of Customer and Community Services
Jackie Sayers	- Scrutiny Officer
Tracy Strange	- Head of Health and Housing

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

David Moses - Hertfordshire County Council  
(for Minute 186 below)

182 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors P Grethe and W Quince.

183 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairman referred to sub-standard lighting in the car park and advised Members to take extra care when leaving the building after the meeting.

184 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs D M Hone declared a personal interest in the matter referred to at Minute 186 – Health Scrutiny, in that she was a governor for the Hertfordshire Partnership NHS Trust.

RESOLVED ITEMSACTION185 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2007 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

186 HEALTH SCRUTINY

David Moses, Head of Scrutiny at Hertfordshire County Council, gave a presentation on health scrutiny arrangements in Hertfordshire. He referred to the statutory framework and the current structures operating in Hertfordshire. He detailed various current issues being considered by the Health Scrutiny Committee and outlined the timeline for their scrutiny. Finally, he detailed the ways

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in which District Councils could influence the scrutiny process.

In response to Members' questions and comments, David Moses specified the means by which the Council could influence the health scrutiny process. The Health Scrutiny Committee could pursue various measures, including:

- giving publicity to issues of concern;
- referring matters of concern to the Secretary of State; and
- influencing health providers through constructive engagement.

It was noted that proposed service changes that cut across boundaries would require the establishment of a joint scrutiny committee.

The Chairman thanked David Moses for attending the meeting.

The Committee gave consideration to a report of the Chief Executive seeking Members' views on how the Council could best contribute to the scrutiny of local health services. The Committee Chairman referred to the forthcoming review of the scrutiny function and suggested that this provided an opportune time to consider health scrutiny.

The Committee considered the various models of health scrutiny within Hertfordshire and concluded that a Health Engagement Panel, reporting to the policy development Scrutiny Committee, should exist. Its terms of reference and reporting lines could be clarified within the overall scrutiny review.

It was suggested by a Member that in view of various ongoing issues, the new panel should be established as

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soon as possible.

RESOLVED – that the Executive be advised that this Committee supports the establishment of a Health Engagement Panel for scrutinising local health issues and that this be considered within any review of the scrutiny function.

187 COUNCIL PRIORITIES AND STRAPLINES

The Head of Strategic Direction (shared) and Communications Manager submitted a report proposing the adoption of “straplines” to support the Council’s six priorities. Following the most recent staff survey, the understanding of corporate objectives was shown to be lower than in many of the other organisations that Ipsos MORI, which carried out the survey, had worked with. This had suggested that there were some difficulties in communicating organisational aims to staff.

As a result of these findings, it was proposed that shorter, more memorable straplines be created to aid Officers’ recall. Suggestions had been considered by Executive Members in early June 2007 and the straplines now detailed in the report submitted, had been proposed.

The Head of Strategic Direction (shared) and Communications Manager emphasised that the proposals did not affect the Council’s priorities as these were not been amended.

The Committee considered the proposed straplines and made a number of comments. In general, the Committee supported the concept but was unsure of the straplines set out in the report now submitted. As an example, in respect of the strapline, ‘Fit for purpose, fit for you’, it was suggested that the word ‘services’ could be included. One Member welcomed the proposals and stated her belief that the straplines provided the necessary focus.

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Councillor D Clark asked for the Minutes to record that she believed the proposed straplines to be bland catch-alls.

RESOLVED - that the Executive be advised that the Committee supports the concept of the straplines, but requests that further thought be given to tweaking the proposals set out in the report now submitted.

188 IMPLEMENTATION OF REVISED EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY

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Further to consideration of the Empty Homes Strategy on 20 March 2007, the Committee received a report on the procedures that Officers would follow in implementing the Empty Homes Strategy (Minute 661 refers).

The Committee recalled that at the time of the Strategy being approved, Members had requested that a further report be submitted on a protocol of procedures that would be followed by Officers in implementing the strategy.

The Empty Homes Officer detailed a protocol that would be followed and presented examples of the work undertaken in 2006.

Councillor D Clark referred to concerns she had raised previously in respect of the criteria for which properties would be targeted and whether there were necessary safeguards in minimising risks to the Council. She compared the Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO) process to that followed in planning enforcement, whereby a committee decision was necessary. She expressed concern that the process did not contain sufficient Member involvement.

In response, the Empty Homes Officer outlined the EDMO process, the stringent evidence that needed to be submitted and the exceptions that applied to certain properties. She highlighted the Member involvement in

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enforcement action.

Some Members stated that they had been reassured by the protocol.

The Committee endorsed the Guidance for Developing Working Procedures for Empty Homes Activity.

RESOLVED – that the Guidance for Developing Working Procedures for Empty Homes Activity, as detailed in the report now submitted, be endorsed.

189 PARKS AND OPEN SPACES STRATEGY 2007 AND STATUS REPORT ON CURRENT PROJECTS

The Committee considered a report on the amended Draft Parks and Open Spaces Strategy. The Committee recalled that an initial draft had been considered by the Committee on 20 March 2007.

The Head of Environmental Services stated that the report detailed a Strategy which would form the policy framework under which Parks Management Plans for individual sites would be developed. A High Level Action Plan had also been developed citing key milestones in the implementation of the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy. It set out the current status of projects being undertaken and identified a timeline for future proposed projects for the development of the parks and open spaces of East Herts. He also drew attention to the status report of current projects.

In response to Members' questions, the Head of Environmental Services commented that the Strategy was about developing existing provision and that the Council's approach towards developing new open spaces in partnership with other providers had been established in 2004/05 as part of a report on Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 17. The Strategy was a five year one that tied in with the Cultural Strategy. The Action Plan would be reviewed annually. Finally, he referred to new sites that

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were being developed as part of Section 106 Agreements

The Committee supported the Strategy and the Action Plan as now submitted.

RESOLVED – that the Executive be advised that the Committee:

(A) endorses the amended Draft Parks and Open Spaces Strategy as now submitted;

(B) endorses the High Level Action Plan as now submitted; and

(C) notes the status report of current projects for parks and open spaces development.

190 CULTURAL STRATEGY 2007 - 2012

The Committee considered a report on the draft Cultural Strategy 2007 – 2012.

Members made a number of comments relating to specific sections of the Strategy, which Officers undertook to take on board. More generally, the following comments were highlighted.

Members expressed support for the description of what had been done which had been well documented. However, the Strategy's intentions did not go beyond a year and Members felt that actions beyond that were absent.

It was also suggested by one Member that the Strategy did not address recent decisions taken on swimming pools.

In terms of presentation, the need for plain English in the document was referred to. It was also suggested that the organisation of the Strategy document should be reviewed as it appeared that certain topics, eg sport, were difficult to

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follow.

The Committee supported the Strategy as a framework document for 2007 – 08, subject to the suggested amendments and detailed comments made.

RESOLVED – that the Executive be advised that the Committee supports the Cultural Strategy as a framework document for 2007 – 08, subject to the suggested amendments and detailed comments made.

191 WORK PROGRAMME 2007/08

The Chief Executive submitted a report inviting the Committee to review its work programme for the remainder of the current Civic Year.

The Chairman advised that in view of the forthcoming review of scrutiny, the work programme should be accepted as detailed in the report now submitted, subject to the inclusion of an item relating to the long term future of leisure provision for the meeting on 4 December 2007.

RESOLVED – that the work programme for 2007/08, as now amended, be approved.

The meeting closed at 10.05 pm.

Chairman	.....
Date	.....