

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
POLICY DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD
ON TUESDAY, 3 JULY 2007 AT 7.30 PM

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

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors D Andrews, S A Bull, R Beeching,
M G Carver, R L Parker, P A Ruffles.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Elizabeth Foy	- Housing Options Manager
Jeff Hughes	- Head of Democratic Services
Ceridwen Pettit	- Head of Strategic Direction (shared) and Performance Manager
Lois Prior	- Head of Strategic Direction (shared) and Communications Manager
Andrew Pulham	- Acting Head of Parking Services
Jackie Sayers	- Scrutiny Officer

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Jo Greenbank	- Savills
Peter Riley	- Locata

112 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors P R Ballam and A F Dearman.

RESOLVED ITEMSACTION113 MINUTES

In response to a question from Councillor D Clark in respect of an element of the narrative to Minute 101 – Leisure Service Operations – the Chairman clarified the opportunities that may be available for public access to joint provision pools, for example through establishing swimming clubs.

Councillor D Clark highlighted a query she had raised at Council meeting on 27 June 2007 concerning the Minutes of the joint meeting of the Authority's two scrutiny committees on 22 May 2007. The Head of Democratic Services confirmed that these Minutes would be submitted to the next joint meeting for confirmation as a correct record of the proceedings. Councillor Clark noted that another mechanism would need to be found to address the issue now raised.

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2007 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

114 CHOICE-BASED LETTINGS

The Executive Member for Housing and Health submitted a report inviting the Committee to support a proposal for the Council to enter into a contract to provide a Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme in the District.

The Executive Member reminded the Committee of the Executive's recommendation to Council, made at its meeting on 12 September 2006, to develop such a scheme (Minute 222 refers). Council had subsequently adopted the recommendation at its meeting on 20 September 2007.

The Committee noted that a consortium of Hertfordshire and Essex local authorities had been created to initiate a

ACTION

CBL scheme for local home seekers, be they existing tenants, housing applicants or homeless households. Government funding of £96,000 was being used to help cover the scheme's set up costs. Running costs would be met by each local authority on the basis of their own transaction volumes.

The Executive Member explained how a CBL scheme would operate. He highlighted that a key element was the concept of enhanced applicant "choice" around the type and location of property they could seek. This would enable an applicant to make a more informed decision about their future home. The introduction of a CBL scheme had required the Authority to review its housing allocation policy to reflect the fact that housing applicants had more "choice" rather than be the subject of an "allocation" process. The revised policy was currently the subject of a consultation exercise.

The Committee noted that a tender exercise had been undertaken for the provision of a CBL service. Following evaluation of the tenders received, Council was being recommended to accept the bid from Locata for the reasons detailed in the report now submitted.

The Executive Member detailed the financial implications of introducing a CBL scheme.

The Committee noted the details of how the scheme would be publicised, particularly in relation to the likely customer base. It also noted that applicants would still be included within the housing register.

The Committee supported the recommendations of the Executive Member on this matter. It also agreed that officers be requested to submit, at least, an annual report reviewing the workings of the CBL scheme.

ACTION

RESOLVED – that Executive be advised that this Committee supports the following recommendations in respect of Choice-based Lettings:

DNS

(A) East Hertfordshire District Council enter into a five year contract with Locata to provide a Choice Based Lettings scheme;

(B) the revised housing allocation policy be approved;

(C) an additional £20,000 item be included in the 2008/2009 draft revenue estimates to fund this scheme, and

(D) officers be requested to submit, at least, an annual report reviewing the workings of the scheme referred to in (A) above.

115 CAR PARK PAY ON FOOT/EXIT FEASIBILITY STUDY

The Executive Member for Planning Policy and Transport submitted a report identifying the relative merits of different methods for paying for parking and assessing the suitability of a “pay on foot/exit approach”, using three of the Council’s car parks as a model.

The Executive Member reminded the Committee that the Authority’s car parks currently employed the “pay and display” method as a means of collecting parking payments.

The principal difference between the payment systems identified was that a pay on foot system was normally entirely automated whereas pay on exit could be automated. The latter system often required the presence of an attendant to receive payment from a motorist upon their exit from the car park.

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The Committee noted that, in 2006, Council had commissioned a feasibility study into the introduction of pay on foot/exit in its car parks. Three car parks had been chosen, purely as models, for the study. These were Kibes Lane surface car park in Ware and Gascoyne Way and Bircherley Green multi-storey car parks in Hertford

A copy of the report on the outcome of that study was appended to the report now submitted.

The Committee noted that the study had identified difficulties in converting Kibes Lane and Gascoyne Way car parks to pay on foot/exit and this was likely to be the case for a number of the car parks in East Herts. The low capacity of many, their internal layout and the nature of the approach roads rendered many of them unsuitable for pay on foot/exit to a varying degree. In addition, a pay on foot/exit arrangement would not engender significant benefits in long stay only car parks, where the purchase of a pay and display ticket would entitle the holder to stay for the entire day. The potential benefit of such a system only arose in short stay or mixed use car parks.

The Executive Member detailed the costs associated with pay on foot/exit schemes commented on the projected impact on parking charges using the Bircherley Green and Kibes Lane car parks as examples. The Executive Member also highlighted the impact of pay on foot/exit charging would have on the Authority's Decriminalised Parking Enforcement operations.

The Executive Member advised that, at a meeting held in March 2007, between Council officers and Savills, the managing agents of Bircherley Green shopping centre and Waitrose (the anchor tenant) the subject of pay on foot was discussed at length. Those present were made aware of the likely capital and revenue costs associated with a move to pay on foot. The Savills representative indicated that they would be prepared to discuss with the Council the possibility of them contributing to the costs of installation of a pay on

ACTION

foot system, structural conversion and operational costs.

The Executive Member reminded the Committee that the method of collecting car park charges was an element of an integrated parking regime.

The Committee noted the report now submitted on this matter.

The Committee considered that, without setting a precedent, Bircherley Green multi-storey car park should be identified for a potential pay on foot charging scheme, possibly in partnership with the associated shopping centre. Officers were requested to prepare a detailed analysis of the costs associated with such a charging scheme (together with any associated implications for car parking charges) and report thereon to a future meeting

RESOLVED - that (A) the report now submitted, which compares the merits of pay and display and pay on foot/exit parking and addresses the implications of implementing a pay on foot/exit payment system in car parks in East Herts, be noted,

(B) the Executive be advised that this Committee considers that, without setting a precedent, Bircherley Green multi-storey car park be identified for a potential pay on foot charging scheme, possibly in partnership with the associated shopping centre, and.

DCCS

(C) officers be requested to prepare a detailed analysis of the costs associated with such a charging scheme referred to in (B) above (together with any associated implications for car parking charges) and report thereon to a future meeting

DCCS

ACTION116 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 Committee noted the items identified for consideration at future meetings. It confirmed it wished to consider the following items at its meeting on 21 August 2007:

- Parks and Open Spaces Strategy
- Budget Strategy (if available)
- Empty Homes Strategy – Implementation Protocols

In response to comments from a Member, the Committee agreed that a report should be submitted to its next meeting on the progress of identifying how the Council would input on health scrutiny issues, and in particular the role of back bench Members.

RESOLVED – that the work programme for the Committee, detailed in the appendix to the report now submitted and subject to the decisions now detailed, be approved.

117 ITEMS FOR REPORT AND NOTING

RESOLVED – that the following information reports be noted:

(A) Children and Young People's Play Strategy,
and

(B) Revised East Herts CPA Improvement Plan
2007/08

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm.

ACTION

Chairman
Date