

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL  
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD  
ON TUESDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 2009 AT  
7.30 PM

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PRESENT: Councillor D Andrews (Chairman).  
Councillors R Beeching, R N Copping, R Gilbert,  
G Lawrence, J Mayes, J O Ranger, J Warren,  
M Wood.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors A P Jackson, P A Ruffles.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Anne Freimanis	- Chief Executive
Linda Bevan	- Committee Secretary
Dave Cooper	- Performance Officer
Lorna Georgiou	- Performance and Improvement Co- ordinator
Philip Hamberger	- Programme Director of Change
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
Alan Madin	- Director of Internal Services

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Paul Dossett	- External Auditor
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355 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

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The Chairman said he had found his visit to the Council's Fund Managers, Sector very valuable. Sector had offered to run an update session for all Members at the Council Offices and he encouraged Members to attend. He said dates for the session would be circulated.

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RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 6 October 2009 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

357 2009/10 SERVICE PLANS – SUMMARY OF PROGRESS AND EXCEPTIONS REPORT

A report was submitted by the Leader of the Council on Service Plan Actions that had been achieved, were on target and those which required a revised completion date.

Members said it was difficult to assess the progress of some of the services presented for their consideration at Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee because they mostly concerned the internal workings of the Council and not always physical things that could be looked at. The Programme Director of Change highlighted the work done by IT on Government Connect. This gave a secure way of transferring data following highly publicised losses of personal data by government agencies. He assured Members that robust measures were in place to ensure all data including paper copies was handled securely. He also said he would be giving Members a practical demonstration of the equipment to be used for homeworking which would start the following week. In response to a question from a Member, he said that the IT section had made good progress since its workload had been prioritised.

Members also said it was difficult to control housing development in the District when their planning decisions were overturned on appeal by Government Inspectors. A Member emphasised the need to comment on the current consultation on the East of England. He also drew attention to the work on the Council's Local Development Framework (LDF) which would promote adequate infrastructure e.g. water and sewerage for development.

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Some revised dates on the action plan were noted. The Programme Director of Change said these were not necessarily related to the Changing the Way We Work (C3W) Programme. Some delay with the Council Chamber enhancements had been resolved.

The Committee decided to note the progress against 2008/09 Service Plans and revised dates in the action plan.

RESOLVED – that (A) a summary of progress against 2009/10 Service Plan actions be received; and

(B) those actions requiring revised completion dates be noted.

### 358 RESULTS OF 2009 RESIDENTS' SURVEY

The Leader of the Council gave a presentation on the results of the 2009 Residents' Survey.

The survey tracked customer satisfaction with the Council and individual service areas. The 2009 survey had been conducted through a postal survey rather than face-to-face as in previous years. Comparisons with previous residents' surveys, Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI) general surveys and the 2008 Place Survey were presented. An action plan arising from responses to the survey had been drawn up. These actions were combined with those arising from the Place Survey. The action plan also showed areas of concern for the East Herts Local Strategic Partnership to consider.

The findings of the 2009 Residents' Survey were generally better than those from the 2008 Place Survey. The LSP would be asked to consider the action plan and responses to the information provided by the Residents' and Place Surveys.

Members asked a number of questions and made

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comments on the results. They noted that trends up or down were important in these surveys. It appeared residents were most concerned with improving services which directly affected their day to day lives. Although they were aware of climate change, it was possible they were less concerned with this because taking measures to improve it could be inconvenient to them e.g. less car usage. The Leader thought Members could influence improvements on roads and pavements through the Highways Joint Member Panel. They could take individual action to engage teenagers in the District. Issues not directly under their control could be moved on by partnership working and influence within the LSP and this could be scrutinised by Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee. In addition, the LSP was open to scrutiny.

The Leader said that the Council's contribution towards PCSOs and CCTV would need careful consideration. Members expressed the hope that the good work done through these partnerships would continue. Councillor J O Ranger drew attention to recent improved crime figures that showed joint working was effective.

Councillor R Gilbert expressed concern about lack of cleaning of streets away from town centres. Members felt the public and businesses should take some responsibility for cleaning the area outside their own properties.

The Leader explained that, although there had been a reduction in those who felt the quality of East Herts services was good overall, opinion had moved to undecided rather than to a negative stance. Members felt this might be due to the considerable number of new flats and houses with new residents who were not yet connected to the area and who had not yet formed an opinion.

He felt satisfaction with recycling would improve once the new alternate refuse collection (ARC) scheme had been in place for a few months. Councillor M Wood congratulated Officers on the publicity and planning for ARC which

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seemed to have resulted in good use and acceptance of the scheme.

Councillor Wood said he had supported an increase in cycleways for some years as identified in the survey. The Leader said these could be increased by supporting partners who were funded to work on such infrastructure.

The Leader said he hoped proposals for Castle Hall would increase residents' satisfaction with cultural facilities, e.g. cinema. He also hoped the Council's investment in swimming pools would increase residents' satisfaction with leisure services.

Councillor J O Ranger expressed concern about the level of complaints, the lack of satisfaction with the time taken to respond to them and the response itself. He felt this should be scrutinised. Philip Hamberger explained that these results did not accord with those from the Council's new complaints system. It was noted that the Council's complaints system was already scheduled to be scrutinised by Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee in 2010 when an adequate amount of information was available.

The Leader drew attention to the need to increase the community leadership role of local Councillors in providing information and engaging residents on topics of concern. Members expressed doubt about the usefulness of Community Voice meetings and agreed these should be re-evaluated. A Member suggested Members could attend the Annual Meetings of Parish and Town Councils as an alternative way of engaging with the local community. Another Member suggested organising individual meetings on specific topics would be more useful.

The Committee decided the Executive should be informed of its comments, noted that the LSP would be considering actions arising from the surveys and agreed to receive a regular monitoring report.

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RESOLVED – that (A) the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee notes that the East Herts Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) will be requested to consider possible actions in response to the information provided by the Place and Residents' Surveys;

(B) a monitoring report on the action plan be submitted on a six monthly basis; and

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(C) the Executive be informed of the comments of the Committee as detailed above.

359 CORPORATE HEALTHCHECK – JULY 2009 TO SEPTEMBER 2009

The Director of Internal Services submitted an exception report on the performance of key indicators relating to Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee for July to September 2009.

Members made comments on a number of items in the report. They said the issuing of Penalty Charge Notices for parking was giving a favourable balance but one Member was concerned that it was detracting from the reputation of the Council with residents. It was noted that recycled materials were providing an increased income. However, fewer bulky items were being disposed of and collected because of the economic situation.

The Director of Internal Services said that the overall adverse balance had reduced and would continue to do so. He explained the figures given for staffing, in response to a question from a Member, who thought these costs should be more tightly controlled. On capital expenditure, some projects had been brought forward.

The Chief Executive undertook to provide Members with a written response to explain the delay on closure of public conveniences and providing facilities though local

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businesses which had led to an overspend.

The Committee decided to note the report.

RESOLVED – that the Corporate Healthcheck for July to September 2009 be noted.

360 WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10

The Chairman of the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee submitted a report inviting the Committee to review its Work Programme.

The Scrutiny Officer drew attention to the need to scrutinise proposals for Castle Hall within a tight timeframe. Members were asked to consider them at the meeting of Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee because such a significant investment in one of the Council’s assets should be reviewed in that forum and the timing of the April meeting fitted the project schedule. Members of the Community and Environment Scrutiny Committees would be invited to the meeting.

The Committee had already decided to receive a monitoring report on the action plan for the Place and Residents’ Surveys and the Scrutiny Officer undertook to add this to the Committee’s work programme.

The Committee decided to approve the Work Programme as now detailed.

RESOLVED - that the Work Programme be approved with the addition of the six monthly monitoring report on the action plan for the Place and Residents’ Surveys.

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The meeting closed at 9.35 pm.

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

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