

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
JOINT MEETING OF SCRUTINY
COMMITTEES HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY 1 JUNE 2010, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor D Andrews (Chairman)
Councillors W Ashley, P R Ballam,
R Beeching, D Clark, N P Clark,
R N Copping, A D Dodd, Mrs M H Goldspink,
P Grethe, J Hedley, Mrs D L E Hollebon,
Mrs D Hone, G McAndrew, J Mayes,
N C Poulton, J O Ranger, P A Ruffles,
V Shaw, J J Taylor, R I Taylor, A L Warman,
J P Warren, C Woodward and
B M Wrangles.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors S A Bull and A P Jackson.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Committee Secretary
Lorna Georgiou	- Performance and Improvement Co-ordinator
Philip Hamberger	- Programme Director of Change
Mark Kingsland	- Health and Fitness Development Officer
Will O'Neill	- Head of Community and Cultural Services
Ceri Pettit	- Head of Strategic Direction (shared) and Performance Manager
George A Robertson	- Director of

Customer and
Community
Services

43 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors K Darby, G Lawrence and M Wood. It was noted that Councillors P A Ruffles and R I Taylor were in attendance as substitutes for Councillors G Lawrence and M Wood respectively.

RESOLVED ITEMS

44 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

It was proposed by Councillor D L E Hollebon and seconded by Councillor C Woodward, that Councillor D Andrews be appointed as Chairman for the meeting.

RESOLVED – that Councillor D Andrews be appointed Chairman for the meeting.

45 MINUTES

Councillor N Clark sought clarification on a number of outstanding items within the Minutes specifically:

The benefits of the C3W programme, the outcome of the Print Review, the website relaunch and details relating to the removal of fly tips where this took longer than a week.

The Director of Customer and Community Services said that the website relaunch information would be provided as soon as it was available. The Programme Director of Change advised that the benefits of C3W would be reported to Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee. The Director of Internal Services stated that the print review would be circulated when it had been signed off

by Corporate Management Team.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Scrutiny Committees held on 16 February 2010 be conformed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

46 2009/10 END OF YEAR SERVICE PLANNING REPORT

The Leader of the Council submitted a report summarising the 2009/10 actions which had been achieved and those which required a revised completion date. Of the 205 actions, 89% (192) had been achieved and 11% (23) needed to have their completion dates revised, the details of which were included in Essential Reference Paper “B” attached to the report now submitted.

Within the corporate straplines:

Promoting Prosperity and well being; providing access and opportunities: 34 actions had been achieved with 9 requiring that their completion dates be revised.

Fit for purpose, services fit for you: 108 actions had been achieved with 11 actions requiring their completion dates be revised.

Pride in East Herts: 2 actions had been achieved.

Caring about what's built and where: 11 actions had been achieved with one requiring that its completion date needed to be revised.

Shaping now, shaping the future: 12 actions had been achieved.

Leading the way, working together. 15 actions had been achieved with 2 requiring that the completion date be revised.

It was noted that full details on the 2009/10 Service Plan Actions were accessible on the Council's Performance

Management System, Covalent.

Councillor J O Ranger thanked Officers for their work in meeting the target for home and remote working. He referred to the household waste scheme and was concerned to hear from some residents in Cottered that the scheme would be withdrawn. The Director of Customer and Community Services assured the Member that he had no knowledge of the scheme being withdrawn.

Councillor Mrs M H Goldspink thanked Officers for the report but would have like to have received a list of what actions had not been achieved. She queried the position regarding the East Herts Emergency Plan as there appeared to be conflicting information later in the report. The Head of Strategic Direction (shared) Performance Manager explained that the plan was up to date, but that some training needed to be undertaken by individual Officers in specific roles. The Director of Customer and Community Services said that the Emergency Plan was about being prepared and having something in place and raising awareness. Training and preparation was ongoing, as people joined and left the Council.

Councillor R I Taylor said that a lot of actions had a completion date of 31 March 2010 but that these had been put back 12 months. He felt that this appeared to be excessive. The Chairman referred to an email from the Head of Business Support Services providing updates on why actions had been put back 12 months.

Councillor R Beeching referred to the Community Toilet Scheme and highlighted what local businesses in the District would be prepared to make their toilets available to the public. He mentioned the concerns of parents who might have children of a certain age who could use toilets unaccompanied but who could still be vulnerable. The Director of Customer and Community Services thanked councillor Beeching for the support. He asked the Member to if he would be happy for the relevant member of staff to contact him to follow up on the contacts.

DCCS

Councillor P Ballam said that not everyone was happy with the proposal and that Ware Town Council had a number of reservations. She said that the lack of toilets particularly when people changed at bus stops, was a cause for concern and that many people did not want to use the toilets in public houses. She mentioned that she had expressed concern to the Executive about disabled access to a particular facility, Café Euro which had a number of steep steps to navigate.

In response to a query from Councillor C Woodward concerning the Community Toilets, the Programme Director of Change confirmed that a number of conversations had taken place. Councillor Woodward asked Officers to keep any eye on the police statistics bearing in mind that another Police Restructuring was being undertaken.

Councillor Mrs Goldspink suggested that the scheme be reviewed. She also queried why the refuse recycling facility should be included under the classification of “Caring about what’s built (and) where” in that these were services which had nothing to do with building. Councillor Mrs Goldspink requested that Members be included on the Corporate Steering Group which had been established to review development proposals in the District.

The Director of Internal Services explained that it was an Officer Steering Group at an early stage in discussions and that Members would be included at a future point. No decisions were being taken and that Officers were keeping a “watching brief” on issues. Councillor Mrs Goldspink suggested that Members should serve on the Steering Group as observers.

Councillor A P Jackson explained that there was nothing at this stage for Members to be involved in. Officers were merely “shepherding events”.

The Performance Improvement Co-ordinator said that the report provided Members with a summary of achievements during 2009/10. Further and more in-depth information could

be found on Covalent.

Councillor N Clark queried why Business Process Improvement works were just starting. He was concerned that C3W had not identified any Business Improvement Works. The Programme Director of Change explained that a Benefit Profile would be submitted to Members and that there had been a considerable amount of Business Improvement Work mostly in front line services as part of the C3W programme.

Councillor D Clark sought clarification as to why the print review information had not been circulated. She stated that the action as shown, was misleading. The Director of Internal Services explained that the print review had been commissioned in 2009 and undertaken in 2009/10. A draft had been submitted to Corporate Management Team (CMT) for comment and the group had requested further information. That final piece of work had not yet been completed.

Councillors P Ballam indicated her support for the Alternate Refuse Collection (ARC) scheme but was concerned about the brown bin replacement policy. She referred to the fact that East Herts Council had been mentioned negatively in the national press and queried the robustness of the bins. Councillor D Clark added that there was no replacement bin programme and that unless an individual had evidence that a contractor had broken the bin, the resident had to pay £25. Councillor D Clark stated that whilst the issue of the bins might be minuted, she was concerned that nothing would be done about it.

Members supported a request that the Executive be requested to review the current £25 charging policy for the replacement of damaged bins for further consideration by Environment Scrutiny.

The joint meeting received and noted the achievements made against the 2009/10 Service Plan, the actions received and of the good performance in 2009/10 including those actions

requiring revised completion dates.

The joint meeting decided to inform the Executive of Members' comments as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that that the Executive be informed that the joint meeting considers that:

(A) the summary of achievements against 2009/10 Service Plan actions be received and the good performance in 2009/10 (i.e. 89% of actions completed) be noted;

(B) those actions requiring completion dates be noted; and

(C) the Executive be requested to review the £25 charge for replacement and damaged bins and bring forward a proposal for consideration by Environment Scrutiny Committee.

DCCS

47 REPORT ON THE SIX MONTHLY PROGRESS AGAINST THE ALL SURVEY ACTION PLAN

The Leader of the Council submitted a report updating Members on the progress against the All Survey Action Plan. Additionally, within the Residents' Survey, the Council gathered information on residents' satisfaction and local priorities through the Place Survey which had replaced the Best Value performance Indicator (BVPI) Survey.

The Performance and Improvement Coordinator stated that the survey results were extremely pleasing and that in some areas, the Council had improved on previous scores. The Action Plan included 21 actions in total: 9 had been actioned: 5 were in progress: 1 had been postponed; and 6 needed Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) input. Further actions specific to the area which should lead to improvement or could improve performance were set out in the report now submitted.

Councillor R I Taylor referred to the Residents' Survey in that 46% of respondents had identified swimming pools as needing improvement yet there was nothing mentioned of improving swimming pools in the District. The Director of Customer and Community Services explained that as part of the works carried out at Grange Paddocks and Hartham there had been a number of improvements to the pools. He agreed to ask the Head of Service to write to him.

DCCS

Councillor N Clark asked whether there was enough engagement with the public during the budget setting process and value for money. He suggested that in relation to the Place Survey, in terms of satisfaction and gain, there was a need to tell people what the Council had done, rather than the current approach being adopted. The Head of Strategic Direction (shared) Performance Manager said that the Council was currently reviewing the way it undertook the budget consultation process. She explained that the Council did describe what it was doing in areas and what others were doing. She undertook to take the Member's comments on board and share them with the services.

Councillor N Clark asked whether it was possible to have something in the action plan so that he could tell residents what the Council was doing. The Head of Strategic Direction (shared) Performance Manager agreed that it was possible to expand on the information and would update the Action Plan for future submission.

Councillor V Shaw queried how levels of satisfaction were described and the form of wording used in the Place Survey. Officers explained that the form of wording was taken from the questionnaire.

Councillor R Beeching queried the statement that the survey results were "pleasing" and whether there was a more positive message which could be given out to say what was happening in the area.

Councillor J Mayes questioned the use of the word "significantly" in relation to the Place Survey and the

statement on making the area cleaner and greener. She asked whether “T tests” had been undertaken. The Head of Strategic Direction (shared) Performance Manager explained that the analysis had been produced by ORC who had been commissioned to undertake the survey. Figures were not available for comparative purposes. She undertook to write to the Member.

Councillor J O Ranger suggested that complaints be a future topic for scrutiny as he felt the Council was falling down in this area. The Director of Customer and Community Services stated that the 3Cs scheme had only just been introduced and very limited information was available. A report could be prepared based on what information there currently was if Members wished. Councillor Ranger referred to the effectiveness of the LSP.

Councillor A P Jackson said that the LSP was working toward resource mapping across various stakeholders in the group and that responses were good. He made the point that times were difficult and that the Council could no longer continue to fund areas where it once had. He explained what funding was currently available including the details of the Performance Reward Grant scheme.

Councillor N C Poulton referred to levels of crime and those who were vulnerable and the fact that he had received a letter from the Policy Authority saying that they would be cutting back on PCSOs. He added that a lack of these community support officers was already noticed in the village and sought assurances that the Council would work with the Police to cover the village areas.

Councillor A P Jackson stated that PCSOs were funded by a number of sources including the District, County Council, the Police and LSP Partners. Councillor Ballam stated that PCSOs were providing an excellent service in Ware but it was a question of affordability and whether the Council was doing the right thing in the best way.

Councillor Jackson explained that Members needed to

understand why the Council was making the investment and of the outcomes to be achieved. He reminded Members that other partners played a role in funding PCSOs and that decisions needed to be made about ongoing funding as there would be less and less money available for the future and that decisions needed to be made about where the Council invests.

Councillor Ranger was very concerned that Members were considering removing actions relating to the Local Strategic Partnership from the All Survey Action Plan and would have preferred to defer this aspect. He felt that removing PCSOs would be a mistake.

Councillor D Clark acknowledged that the nature of the LSP was changing and suggested that Officers prepare a report before significant changes were made to the Action Plan.

Members supported a recommendation that the actions which relate to the LSP be deferred from the All Survey Action Plan and that a further report be submitted on the effectiveness and role of the LSP in establishing Council priorities.

The joint meeting decided to inform the Executive of its comments as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that the Executive be informed that the joint meeting considers that:

(A) the progress against the All Survey Action Plan be noted; and

(B) the actions which relate to the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) be deferred from the All Survey Action Plan, for the reasons set out in paragraph 2.5 of the report and that a further report be prepared on the role of the LSP and its priorities for further consideration by a Scrutiny Committee.

CE/
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The Leader of the Council submitted a report setting out the performance indicators which the Council is required to monitor and publish annually in the Corporate Strategic Plan. The report advised Members of the performance outturns for 2009/10 and showed areas where performance outturns were outstanding as set out in the attached Essential Reference Papers.

It was noted that Officers had removed national indicators relating to third parties. It was also noted that in addition to the requirement for Local Authorities to monitor performance within their services the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) had also conducted a national review of the National Indicators set. The outcomes of this report were also set out in the report now submitted.

Following financial pressures, services had re-evaluated their functions so that performance reflected the Council's core priority areas and within resources set out in the Medium Term Financial Plan.

The Performance Improvement Co-ordinator reported that of the 72 performance indicators (including sub parts) for 2009/10:-

- 40.28% were on or above target
- 16.67% were 6% or more off target
- 37.50% unable to analyse as no data or target for 2009/10
- 5.56% (to be announced) – data not yet available

Of the performance indicators for which an outturn trend status was available, 42.65% showed improvement. A breakdown of indicators which have not met the set target, their strapline classification and those which were showing a "red" performance were set out in the report now submitted.

The Performance Improvement Co-ordinator explained key changes to reporting performance indicators in relation to 2009/10 outturn data and future targets of those where information was not available including where data was

dependent from third parties. It was noted that 7 National Indicators had been removed.

A list of performance indicators where an outturn or target could not be provided (owing to timing) was set out in the report now submitted. The dates when the outstanding information would become available was set out in the report now submitted and would be reported in a future Corporate Healthcheck.

Updates were provided in relation to those indicators whereby services had set or revised future targets EHPI 64 (Vacant dwellings returned to occupation or demolished) – target reduced from 12 to 10 days for 2010/11 and EHPI 6.8 (Turnaround of Pre NTO PCN Challenges) – target reduced from 10 days to 14 days. Data quality spot checks had been carried out on 10 performance indicators. Areas for improvement were identified within four National Indicators the detail of which was set out in the report now submitted.

Councillor N Clark queried the indicators for the number of under 16 swims and asked what action was being taken to improve on this figure. The Head of Community and Cultural Services said that discussions were ongoing with the contractor (SLM) about this issue.

Councillor N Clark asked whether there was any “leakage” to other Districts in relation to free swims. The Head of Community and Cultural Services said that there may have been a move to other private suppliers of leisure facilities and although there was no specific evidence to this effect.

Councillor J Mayes suggested that under 16 swims be more actively marketed to schools to encourage usage. The Head of Community and Cultural Services undertook to look into this. HCCS

Councillor A Warman asked whether the information on the number of swims could be made available. The Head of Community and Customer Services undertook to provide this information. HCCS

Councillor W Ashley referred to the planning appeals performance indicator. He stated that Officers had been working hard on this issue and that an improvement in the figures would be reported to Development Control Committee on 2 June 2010.

Councillor J Hedley said that only one complaint had been referred to the Local Government Ombudsman and that it was ridiculous to have an indicator for such a low turnaround.

Councillor G McAndrew queried the figures for long term absences and the fact that data was not yet available. The Performance and Improvement Co-ordinator agree to write to the Member with an explanation.

Councillor D Clark queried the Corporate Healthcheck for March 2010. She said that there were a number of variances which gave misleading information. She felt that there should be a reconciliation showing how the variances added up from one month to the next and that this should be consistently applied across departments. She questioned a number of issues in relation to the allocation of funding by the Herfordshire Waste Partnership to the Council. Councillor D Clark referred to the timing of the Medium Term Financial Plan and requested that Scrutiny Committees be provided with an indicative update of the MTFP in September each year reflecting the outcome of the final accounts and any other changes. Councillor D Clark wished to make a number of amendments to the recommendation in relation to the Corporate Healthcheck including a need to review priorities and straplins.

The Director of Internal Services agreed that it was reasonable to incorporate within the Healthcheck report a reconciliation showing how variances added up month to month and that this should be consistently applied across departments. He supported the suggestion that Scrutiny Committees receive an indicative update of the MTFP in September each year to reflect the outcome of the final accounts including any other changes.

Councillor J O Ranger expressed concern about any changes to the MTFP. He said that it was the practice of scrutiny committees to look at the MTFP in terms of what is happening in the budget and proposed cuts.

Councillor A P Jackson supported a review of priorities and straplines as part of the budget process.

The Committee decided to make comments now detailed to the Executive.

RESOLVED – that the Executive be informed that the joint meeting considers that:

- (A) the Outturns for 2009/10 and the updated targets be noted;
- (B) the dates when the outstanding data will become available, be noted;
- (C) the March 2010 Corporate healthcheck report be noted; and
- (D) in respect of healthcheck reports DIS
 - (i) in future these to include a reconciliation showing how variances “add up” from one month to the next;
 - (ii) the Finance department ensures that the approach to reporting of variances is consistent across departments;
- (E) a report be submitted to Environment Scrutiny Committee explaining the basis of allocation of funding to the Council by the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership, how and when the formulae are agreed, and the timing of the Council’s ability to calculate sums likely to be receivable; DIS/
DCCS

(F) Scrutiny Committees receive an indicative update of the MTFP in September each year to reflect the outcome of the final accounts and any other potential changes based on information that has become available since the MTFP was last approved by the Council; and DIS

(G) Scrutiny Committees and the Executive review priorities and straplines as part of the budget process. CE/
DIS

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm

Chairman
Date