

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD
ON TUESDAY, 10 JUNE 2008 AT
7.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor W Quince (Chairman).
Councillors D Clark, A F Dearman,
Mrs M H Goldspink, P Grethe, G McAndrew,
M P A McMullen, D A A Peek, N C Poulton,
G D Scrivener (substitute for Councillor W
Ashley).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillors T Milner and C Woodward.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Jackie Bruce	- Service Development Officer
Cliff Cardoza	- Head of Environmental Services
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
Peter Mannings	- Democratic Services Assistant
George A Robertson	- Director of Customer and Community Services
David Thorogood	- Environmental Co-ordinator

60 APOLOGY

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor W Ashley. It was noted that Councillor G D Scrivener was in attendance as substitute for Councillor W Ashley.

ACTIONRESOLVED ITEMSACTION61 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

It was proposed by Councillor N C Poulton and seconded by Councillor P Grethe that Councillor D A A Peek be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Environment Scrutiny Committee for the Civic Year.

RESOLVED – that Councillor D A A Peek be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Environment Scrutiny Committee for the Civic Year.

62 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2008 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

63 CLIMATE CHANGE – SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

The Chairman of the Climate Change Task and Finish Group, Councillor D A A Peek, stated that the Group had held its first meeting on 9 May 2008. He introduced the Committee to the draft scoping document that had been supported by the Group.

Councillor Peek commented that the Youth Council would be fully consulted as part of the work of the Task and Finish Group. He stated that the Task and Finish Group would engage with the Youth Council through the annual Youth Conference in September 2008. The Scrutiny Officer confirmed this topic had been added to the next Youth Council agenda and a workshop on Climate Change had been booked for the Youth Conference.

Councillor N C Poulton commented on whether town and parish councils had been involved. Councillor Peek stated that there had been no such involvement to date. He commented that town and parish councils could be added

ACTION

to the list of key stakeholders.

RESOLVED – that the scope of the review be approved.

64 UPDATE ON THE PROCUREMENT OF A SUITABLE COMPOSTING PLANT AND/OR TRANSFER FACILITY

The Head of Environmental Services submitted a report updating the Committee on Hertfordshire County Council's progress towards the provision of a composting plant and suitable transfer facility.

The Committee was advised that the contract had yet to be awarded for a facility which would allow for the recycling of cardboard and food waste. Members were advised that there had been 11 tenderers who had submitted 23 options and these were being considered as part of the tender process.

The Head of Environmental Services reported that the County Council was unlikely to be in a position to provide the new facility for recycling food waste and cardboard by winter 2008/09 and this could impact on the Council's own projected plans for recycling.

In response to a query from Councillor D Clark, the Head of Environmental Services confirmed that some of the shortlisted options could be achieved within the budget this Council had allocated. He confirmed that East Herts Council would seek to ensure the final option could be covered by existing budgets.

Councillor D Clark commented on the process for communicating the outcome of the tender process to Members. The Chairman requested that the Head of Environmental Services e-mail the outcome of the procurement process to Members and substitutes of this Committee.

ACTION

RESOLVED – that the progress of the County Council with the provision of a new facility be noted.

65 PRESENTATION ON VISIT TO LONDON WASTE LTD
ECO PARK

The Head of Environmental Services gave a presentation in respect of a visit by Members and Officers to the London Waste Ltd Eco Park at Edmonton. He commented in detail on the processes and technology utilised at the Eco Park in processing waste from surrounding areas, including a small amount from East Herts.

The Committee was advised that a Hertfordshire County Council project team was working on a bid to Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) for private finance initiative (PFI) funding to provide a residual waste treatment facility locally for the future. In response to a query from Councillor D Clark, the Head of Environmental Services commented that approximately 5% of the residue produced by the energy from waste plant could not be recycled and had to be sent to landfill.

The Committee noted the presentation. A Member requested that a further trip be organised for the benefit of Members who had been unable to attend the recent visit. The Head of Environmental Services undertook to write to Members to determine whether there were sufficient numbers interested to justify an EHC visit and if not, to arrange for Members to join another group visiting the Eco Park.

RESOLVED – that the presentation be noted.

66 PROGRESS REPORT ON PARKS AND OPEN SPACES
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Executive Member for Community Development, Leisure and Culture submitted a report updating Members on progress of projects identified in the high level action

ACTION

plan and undertaken as part of the Parks and Open Spaces Development Programme.

The Committee was updated in respect of the Green Flag Award Bid for Southern Country Park in Bishop's Stortford. Members were advised that the Green Flag application had been made in January 2008 and judging had taken place in May 2008. The Committee was advised that results would be known in July. It was noted that achievement of Green Flag Status was part of the Council's commitment to achieving Hertfordshire wide Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets and success would attract additional Government funding.

Officers proposed that the next Green Flag bid should be either at The Ridgeway Open Space, Hertford or Hartham Common although the latter could not be achieved in time for the next bidding round in the autumn. Councillor P Grethe commented that allocating resources to Parks and Open Spaces was essential to ensure such places were looked after.

In response to a separate query from Councillor C Woodward, Councillor T Milner confirmed that Parish and Town Councils would be fully involved in the consultation and management of the Castle Gardens.

In response to a query from Councillor Woodward on the area known as Northern Parkland, Officers undertook to address this query outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED – that (A) the progress of the projects detailed within the Parks and Open Spaces Development Programme Report be noted;

(B) the progress of the Southern Country Park Green Flag Award bid be noted; and

(C) the selection of The Ridgeway Open Space, Hertford as the next Green Flag Bid in 2008/2009 be

DCCS

ACTION

confirmed.

67 CONTRACT PERFORMANCE – ENVIRONMENTAL OPERATIONS

The Head of Environmental Services submitted the annual report advising Members on the current performance of the contracts for Refuse and Recycling, Street Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance.

The Committee was advised that fly tipping had increased over the previous year, partly due to better reporting and partly to the rising costs of waste disposal. Members were advised that East Herts had very low levels of fly-tipping compared with many districts.

In response to a query from Councillor D Clark, the Head of Environmental Services stated that the law prohibited commercial refuse collection from turning over a profit. However, the service had grown significantly over the last four years and was fully covering overheads.

Councillor G McAndrew raised a query in respect of weed spraying on public highways. The Head of Environmental Services commented that spraying took place twice per annum, usually in May/June and in September/October. He stated that the Authority was not permitted to use chemicals that directly affected the soil when treating and weeds needed to be growing before chemicals were effective.

Councillor C Woodward commented that more signage should be provided in respect of the new public conveniences in Bishop's Stortford. He also asked about performance of dealing with abandoned vehicles. The Head of Environmental Services stated that the measure for speed of response for dealing with abandoned vehicles was set by the Government and was a national performance indicator.

ACTION

The Committee was advised that the Council received numerous calls relating to vehicles perceived by the public to be abandoned, as they were outside someone’s house. When in fact they were legitimately owned. Vehicles were removed immediately if there was no tax and they were unregistered. If registered and untaxed, the Council informed the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) and wrote to the last known registered keeper, in addition to affixing a sticker to the vehicle. If the owner did not respond in a set time, the vehicles were removed for disposal.

Members were advised that the number of abandoned vehicles in East Herts was low and the budget for this had been reduced over recent years on the grounds that the Council was now only dealing with a couple of vehicles a month.

RESOLVED – that the current performance of the Council’s main environmental management term contracts be noted.

68 WORK PROGRAMME 2008/09

The Committee considered items to be included in the work programme for 2008/09 and approved the programme as now submitted, subject to the addition of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) ‘Stop the Drop’ Campaign in relation to Litter and Fly Tipping for the meeting on 16 September 2008.

RESOLVED – that the work programme as now amended, be approved.

The meeting closed at 9.20 pm

Chairman
Date

G:\BSWP\NPS\Environment Scrutiny\10 June 2008\Minutes 10 June 2008.doc