

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

PRESENT: Councillor W Quince (Chairman).
Councillors W Ashley, Mrs M H Goldspink,
G McAndrew, M P A McMullen, N C Poulton,
P A Ruffles (substitute for Councillor P Grethe).

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors P R Ballam, M G Carver,
R N Copping, J Demonti, R Gilbert, M Pope,
J J Taylor, J P Warren and C Woodward.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Cliff Cardoza	- Head of Environmental Services
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
Peter Mannings	- Democratic Services Assistant
George A Robertson	- Director of Customer and Community Services
Ian Sharratt	- Environmental Manager

379 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors D Clark, P Grethe, D A A Peek and A L Warman. It was noted that Councillor P A Ruffles was in attendance as substitute for Councillor P Grethe.

RESOLVED ITEMS

ACTION

380 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 September 2008 be confirmed as a correct

record and signed by the Chairman.

381 SPONSORSHIP OF ROUNDABOUTS

The Chairman detailed the current position in that Councillors W Ashley, S A Bull, A L Burlton, J Demonti, R Gilbert, A L Warman and C Woodward had called in a non key decision made by Councillor M G Carver regarding the adoption of the roundabout sponsorship pilot scheme on a permanent basis Districtwide. The Chairman outlined the procedure to be followed at the meeting during consideration of the call in.

The Chairman reminded the Committee that it had three options relating to the call in and the adoption of the current pilot scheme for roundabout sponsorship on a permanent basis Districtwide, as follows:

- refer the matter back to the Executive (which would need to meet within 21 working days of the date of this meeting) – the Executive could either confirm or amend its original decision, or
- refer the matter to Council – if Council objected to the Executive Member’s decision it could refer the matter back to the Executive (which would need to meet within 10 working days to reconsider its decision), or
- do nothing.

Councillor A L Burlton, as one of the signatories to the “call-in” request, commented on the reasons for the matter to be reviewed. He stated that Members’ expectations of what a sponsored roundabout would look like had proved higher than the reality. Councillor Burlton sought clarification on what Members could expect once the pilot scheme was rolled out Districtwide. Councillors W Ashley and A L Burlton sought clarification on the procedure for sponsored roundabouts and the anticipated timescales.

Councillor R Gilbert referred to “Bishop’s Stortford in Bloom”. He stated that ensuring roundabouts in the town had a colourful appearance would cheer up the town.

Councillor C Woodward sought clarification on how sponsorship would enhance the appearance of roundabouts in East Herts. He commented that residents were in support of a scheme for a mix of flowering shrubs and wild flowers to ensure year round colour.

The Head of Environmental Services detailed the background to the current pilot scheme and Councillor Carver’s non-key decision. He commented that the original scheme for 8 to 10 sites in Bishop’s Stortford had been cancelled as traffic management costs had proved prohibitively expensive on this group of mainly high speed roundabouts.

The Committee was advised that a revised scheme had been introduced for mainly low speed roundabouts across the District. The Head of Environmental Services stated that East Herts Council had been assisted by Marketing Force in contacting local businesses to promote the scheme.

The Head of Environmental Services advised that initial improvements to roundabout appearance had resulted from East Herts Council grounds maintenance contractors undertaking grass cutting and pruning works in line with East Herts higher quality standards. He commented that planting could not take place in the summer months due to the prohibitive cost of watering in warmer weather. It was usual to plant up with shrubs in the cooler months.

The Committee was advised that Officers had anticipated that a programme of planting would commence in the Autumn 2008. The Head of Environmental Services commented that staffing issues in Environmental Services had delayed this planned work.

Members were also advised that the purpose of the pilot was to establish whether sufficient funding from

sponsorship could be attracted to cover maintenance and administration costs of the scheme. The pilot scheme had been a success in this regard. The Head of Environmental Services stated that once planting had taken place over the winter, the additional benefits of visual improvements would be evident by Summer 2009.

The Executive Member for Planning Policy and Transport stated that the sponsorship pilot had provided local businesses with an opportunity to promote themselves. He commented that the success of the pilot had been achieved at no cost to the Authority.

The Committee was advised that a small surplus from the first round of sponsorship would be reinvested in improved planting of roundabouts. The Executive Member commented that some neighbouring authorities had planted up roundabouts with large bedding displays, but there had been a cost implication for the Authority and for Council Tax payers.

Members were advised that the scheme in East Herts had been set up to involve no cost to East Herts Council as businesses would sponsor the roundabouts. The Executive Member praised the scheme as being a success in achieving its stated objectives.

Councillor P A Ruffles stated that Hertford residents had indicated a preference for improved basic maintenance on roundabouts. He commented that a majority of residents did not want hard landscaped concrete skirts on the edge of Hertford's roundabouts. Members stated different views about whether individual roundabouts should have colourful displays or green planting that was more in-keeping with the rural area.

Councillor Ruffles commented that some residents had expressed concern in respect of motorists being distracted by roundabout signage. He also stated that Hertford Youth Town council had raised concerns in respect of the appearance of sponsorship signage.

The Head of Environmental Service advised that over 200 authorities have roundabout sponsorship and the approach and signs were not uncommon.

Councillor C Woodward stated that he was encouraged by the information that had been given by Officers and Councillor Carver in respect of imminent improvements to roundabouts. He commented on whether a mechanism could be considered to address health and safety concerns in consultation with local groups and local authorities.

Councillor P R Ballam commented that the public and local amenity groups were keen to be involved in consultation on such schemes. She expressed concern that a sign advertising a funeral directors business was not the most appropriate sign to welcome people into Ware.

Councillor N C Poulton commented on whether detailed plans had been drawn up for each roundabout. He commented on whether Members could see the plans. The Head of Environmental Services advised that no detailed plans existed for individual roundabouts, although the process of drafting plans was underway now that staff vacancies had been filled.

Councillor Mrs M H Goldspink commented on how the merit and appearance of each roundabout was assessed so that it was in keeping with local character. She also sought clarification of details of the approach other authorities had taken when dealing with roundabout sponsorship.

The Head of Environmental Services advised that the size and design of the signage was agreed between East Herts Council and Hertfordshire Highways in consultation with Marketing Force. The Committee was also advised of specific details of roundabout sponsorship schemes in neighbouring authority areas.

The Head of Environmental Services stated that Officers would work with Town Councils and local amenity groups regarding additional voluntary sponsorship when rolling out

the pilot across the District on a permanent basis and appropriate consultation would take place with Ward Members.

Councillor J P Warren sought and was given clarification in respect of the action taken to protect the workforce when roundabout works were being undertaken and the costs of traffic management. The Head of Environmental Services gave the example of costs for traffic management on high speed roads for a major grass cutting activity of about £1000 per day.

Councillor G McAndrew proposed and Councillor N C Poulton seconded, a motion that non-key decision 08/33 - Roundabout Sponsorship, Proposed Extension of Pilot Scheme be referred to the Executive for the reasons now detailed. This was approved by the Committee.

RESOLVED - that non-key decision 08/33 - Roundabout Sponsorship, Proposed Extension of the Pilot Scheme be referred to the Executive with the following concerns:

CE

- (A) There is a need for a clearer definition of 'sponsorship' to address the mismatch between public perception of the scheme and the current appearance of sponsored roundabouts.
- (B) Signage should be more aesthetically pleasing and welcoming to visitors without compromising safety.
- (C) There is a need for a mechanism for coordinating with local voluntary sponsorship schemes, e.g. 'Ware in Bloom'.
- (D) No detailed designs of any planting schemes are available.
- (E) Planting should not be uniform across the District, but should be sympathetic to the

character of the local area.

- (F) A mechanism for an appropriate level of consultation with relevant Town Councils and local ward Members should be clarified.

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm.

Chairman

Date

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