

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE
COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS,
HERTFORD ON TUESDAY,
3 MARCH 2009 AT 7.30 PM

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

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors D Andrews, R H Beeching,
M G Carver, L O Haysey, A P Jackson, T Milner,
S Rutland-Barsby, C B Woodward.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Cliff Cardoza	- Head of Environmental Services
Lorna Georgiou	- Performance and Improvement Co-ordinator
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
Alan Madin	- Director of Internal Services
Peter Mannings	- Democratic Services Assistant
Ceri Pettit	- Head of Strategic Direction (shared) and Performance Manager
George A Robertson	- Director of Customer and Community Services
Ian Sharratt	- Environmental Manager
David Thorogood	- Environmental Co-ordinator

599 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors W Ashley and M P A McMullen.

600 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairman commented that the Performance Team would be giving a presentation on Data Quality Strategy Training prior to the main business of the Agenda.

RESOLVED ITEMSACTION601 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2008 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

602 DATA QUALITY STRATEGY TRAINING
(PRESENTATION BY PERFORMANCE TEAM)

The Performance and Improvement Co-ordinator gave a presentation on the Data Quality Strategy. She detailed the actions that had been taken based on the outcomes of the Data Quality Audit. She emphasised the importance of data being fit for purpose in support of good quality decision making.

The Committee was advised that the Authority had data quality champions who worked with the performance team to maintain high standards of data quality. A data interchange hub and performance information systems had built-in controls to maintain standards.

The Performance and Improvement Co-ordinator circulated a copy of a data quality checklist of questions to support Members in decision making. She referred to questions Members should consider in respect of data quality and performance.

The Head of Strategic Direction commented that East Herts Council had high standards of data quality management. In response to a query from Councillor A P Jackson, the Committee was advised that national guidance was very clear on what was expected of outside

bodies when submitting data to the authority.

A Member commented on what action could be taken if a Performance Indicator was not providing the required level of check. Officers advised that national indicators could not be changed and there was a cost implication of introducing new indicators. Local control can be reviewed by considering new local indicators.

The Committee noted the presentation.

RESOLVED - that the presentation be noted.

603 EAST HERTS DRAFT CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Councillor D A A Peek, as Chairman of the Climate Change Task and Finish Group, submitted a report on the work of that Group. He referred Members to Appendix A to the report now submitted as an initial draft of the East Herts Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan as agreed by the Task and Finish Group.

Councillor Peek commended the strategy and action plan to the Committee as a consensus of the views of the Task and Finish Group. He thanked the Members of the Group for their hard work. Councillor Mrs M H Goldspink and the Chairman also thanked Officers for their work with the Task and Finish Group. The Committee was advised that a further draft of the strategy and action plan would come back to Environment Scrutiny in September after the public and partner consultation phase.

The Committee noted the progress that had been made.

RESOLVED - that the progress of the Climate Change Task and Finish Group in preparing a Draft Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, be noted.

604 PROGRESS REPORT ON PARKS AND OPEN SPACES DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Head of Environmental Services submitted a progress report on the parks and open spaces development programme. He detailed the background to the report and commented that East Herts Council has approximately 120 open spaces. The larger spaces detailed in the report would have their own development plan.

The Committee was advised that the timetables detailed in the report now submitted, had been based on the results of a detailed parks and open spaces audit. In response to a query from Councillor D Clark, Officers advised that MUGA was an abbreviation for Multi User Games Area.

In response to a query from Councillor Mrs M H Goldspink, Officers confirmed that local ward Members would be involved in the consultation when management plans were drawn up for each open space. Councillor Goldspink requested that Officers also invite Members from adjacent wards, in addition to the relevant ward Members. Officers undertook to consult more widely and cited the broader consultation exercise which had occurred for Southern Country Park as a good model.

The Committee noted the progress made.

RESOLVED - that the progress with the Parks and Open Spaces Development Programme and the proposed timetable be noted.

605 UPDATE ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY REVIEW

Councillor N C Poulton, as Chairman of the Environmental Quality Review Task and Finish Group, submitted a progress update on the work of the Task and Finish Group.

Councillor Poulton circulated a copy of the draft scoping document. He apologised for not being able to include this in the Agenda as the Group's first meeting had been

cancelled due to severe weather. Although a meeting had now taken place, it had been too late to circulate the draft prior to this meeting. He commented that he had hoped to bring the final report to the June 2009 meeting of the Committee. The Task and Finish Group, having considered the work required and the need to consult with a number of partners, had agreed that a September deadline was more realistic.

Councillor Poulton commented that he hoped that Members could agree to the Committee's work programme being amended so that the final report was submitted to the September 2009 meeting to accommodate more extensive consultation with Town and Parish councils.

Councillor Poulton commented that attending the Rural Conference in May 2009 would provide an opportunity to engage with Town and Parish Councils. He further commented that a partner's conference was provisionally planned for 22 April 2009, to encourage the involvement of statutory bodies to work with East Herts Council in raising the Environmental Quality Standards across the district.

The Committee was advised that a task and finish group meeting with Danny Kyan of Hertfordshire Highways will take place on 11 May 2009. A further meeting would allow Members to undertake a "visual inspection" of the District through photographs and hearing evidence from the Inspection Team.

The Committee supported the scoping document.

RESOLVED - that the plan outlined in the scoping document be supported.

606 ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY HEALTHCHECK –
OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2008

The Director of Customer and Community Services submitted an exception report on the performance of the key indicators related to Environment Scrutiny Committee for October to December 2008.

Councillor D Clark stated that the current target for the number of buildings reinspected in 3 months was 50% when the target had previously been 90%. She commented on whether the Head of Planning and Building Control aimed to reset this target back to 90% next year.

The Director of Customer and Community Services advised that he believed the target for EHPI 2.10 (3) had already been set. He undertook to provide a written response to Councillor D Clark after the meeting.

In response to a query from Councillor D Clark on NI 191 - Residual household waste per household, the Head of Environmental Services advised that the amount of residual household waste per household was shown as a cumulative figure that increased month on month towards an annual total. He stated that the lower the figure in kilos the better the performance, as it showed less residual waste was being sent to landfill.

The Committee received the report.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

607 WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10

The Committee considered items to be included in the work programme for 2009/10 and approved the programme as now submitted, subject to the report from the Environmental Quality Review task and finish group being submitted to the meeting on 15 September 2009 rather than 16 June 2009.

The Scrutiny Officer reported back on a Members' workshop held on 24 February 2009 where potential scrutiny topics for 2009/10 were discussed. An item of high priority was a review of East Herts Planning Enforcement policy. The Committee supported this suggestion.

In response to a query from the Chairman, the Scrutiny

Officer commented that some preliminary work could begin on a review of planning enforcement, subject to agreement on amendments to the Constitution currently under consideration, which would bring this area of responsibility under the remit of this Committee.

Councillor N C Poulton agreed to chair a task and finish group in respect of a review of planning enforcement. He commented that he would meet with Officers next week. The Committee was advised that Members of Development Control Committee should not chair a task and finish group on planning enforcement to avoid any conflicts of interest.

Councillor D Clark suggested that, subject to constitutional changes covering the remit of the scrutiny committees, a scoping report could be submitted to the June 2009 meeting with a final report submitted to the September 2009 meeting.

The Committee approved the submission of a report on a review of development control enforcement policy to the 16 June 2009 meeting and a final report to the 15 September 2009 meeting, subject to agreement on amendments to the Constitution currently under consideration.

The Committee approved the work programme as now amended.

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

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm

Chairman
Date

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