

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 3 MARCH 2009

REPORT BY CHAIRMAN OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY REVIEW
TASK AND FINISH GROUP

7. UPDATE ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY REVIEW

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

'D' RECOMMENDATION - that the Committee considers, comments and agrees the plan outlined in the scoping document from the Task and Finish Group.

1.0 Purpose/Summary of Report

1.1 This report is intended to inform the Environment Scrutiny Committee of the progress of the Environmental Quality Review task and finish group and gain agreement to proceed with the review as detailed in the scoping document.

2.0 Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/Objectives

2.1 Effective use of the scrutiny process contributes to the Council's ability to meet two core objectives:

Fit for purpose, services fit for you

Deliver customer focused services by maintaining and developing a well managed and publicly accountable organisation.

Leading the way, working together

Deliver responsible community leadership that engages with our partners and the public.

3.0 Background

3.1 At the last meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee, members agreed to set up a task and finish group to review Environmental Quality in East Herts.

- 3.2 It was felt important to review this topic as the new Comprehensive Area Assessment inspection system will take a wider holistic view of the district rather than focus on the performance of East Herts Council alone.
- 3.3 There is the possibility that East Herts could receive a poor assessment, even though we are performing well at the things we are responsible for, because residents are unhappy with aspects of environmental quality in the district that are outside of our control.
- 3.4 The expectation of Government is that local authorities will be working in partnership with other public, private and voluntary agencies to seek to address issues which are of concern to local people.
- 3.5 The Task and Finish Group was asked to review and make recommendations on:
- The current performance and standards within the district, from a resident's perspective taking into account wider information sources.
 - The Council's approach to maintaining and improving environmental quality, within the context of legislation, powers and duties and limited financial resources.
 - Best practice approaches taken by similar rural district councils.
 - Opportunities for partnership working with local and national agencies - including public, private and voluntary bodies.
- 3.6 The task and finish group was asked to bring a full scoping report, including timescales, to this 3 March meeting of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee and a final report was expected to come to the following meeting on 16 June 2009.
- 4.0 Report
- 4.1 The membership of the task and finish group is confirmed as being Councillor N C Poulton (nominated as Chairman by Environment Scrutiny Committee) with Councillors R H Beeching, Mrs R F Cheswright, D Clark, Mrs M H Goldspink and J Mayes.
- 4.2 Meetings of the group had been booked for 2 February and 26 February 2009. The first of these meetings was set up to address the detailed work on the scoping report, but due to extreme weather

conditions it had to be cancelled. There was no additional opportunity for the group to meet in the interim, so this work will now be undertaken on the second scheduled date.

4.3 The outcome of those discussions will be presented to Members at the Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting and a general update will be given by the Chairman of the Task and Finish Group.

5.0 Consultation

5.1 None.

6.0 Legal Implications

6.1 None.

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 None.

8.0 Human Resource Implications

8.1 None.

9.0 Risk Management Implications

9.1 Matters which may benefit from scrutiny may be overlooked. Where this involved partners, it could risk damaging the reputation of the council and relations with partners.

Background Papers:

None

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