

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE
WAYTEMORE ROOM, BISHOP'S
STORTFORD, ON TUESDAY,
16 JUNE 2009 AT 7.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs D L E Hollebon (Chairman).
Councillors A L Burlton, Mrs R F Cheswright,
D Clark, Mrs M H Goldspink, P Grethe,
G McAndrew, D A A Peek, N C Poulton.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors R H Beeching, T Milner and
C B 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
Kevin Steptoe	- Head of Planning and Building Control

43 APOLOGY

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor W Ashley.

44 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman commented that she looked forward to working with the Committee and Officers.

The Chairman stated that item 7 - Review of Fees and Charges, had been withdrawn. The Committee was advised that this item would be presented to its 15

September 2009 meeting.

RESOLVED ITEMS

ACTION

45 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2009 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

46 REVIEW OF PLANNING ENFORCEMENT - SCOPING AND INTERIM REPORT

Councillor N C Poulton, Chairman of the Review of Planning Enforcement Task and Finish Group, submitted an update on the work of the Group. He reminded Members that the review had focussed solely on Enforcement Policy.

Councillor Poulton commented that enforcement procedures had not been part of the remit of the task and finish group. He stated that enforcement procedures maybe examined at a later stage.

Councillor Poulton stated that the task and finish group had met with parish councillors and had benefited from the knowledge of an experienced planning agent. The Head of Planning and Building Control stated that the report sought the Committee's endorsement of the scope of the review. He referred Members to the Authority's current enforcement policy at appendix B to the report now submitted.

The Head of Planning and Building Control advised that if Members were happy with the scope of the review, a finalised version of the new enforcement policy would be reported to the Committee in September. The Chairman thanked Councillor Poulton and the task and finish group for the work completed to date.

Councillor Mrs M H Goldspink welcomed a strict but common sense approach to enforcement action. She

commented that the section about complaints should be moved to the end of policy document. Councillor Poulton agreed to report these comments back to the next meeting of the task and finish group.

The Committee noted the progress that had been made and agreed to endorse the scope of the planning enforcement review.

RESOLVED - that the scope of the planning enforcement review be endorsed.

HPBC

47 CONTRACT PERFORMANCE - ENVIRONMENTAL OPERATIONS

The Head of Environmental Services submitted an update report on the current performance of the three operational contracts, for refuse and recycling, street cleansing and grounds maintenance. He commented that performance had been predominantly good over the last 12 months.

The Committee was advised that the performance percentage for missed bins was slightly worse for 2008/09 at 42 missed collections per 100,000 compared to 34 per 100,000 for 2007/08. Members were advised that this was most likely due to contractors and residents learning new schedules following the roll out of the extended service for garden waste collections.

The Head of Environmental Services stated that the percentage of household waste recycled and composted had increased from 29.9% to 34.9%. He commented that the target for 2008/09 was 36.5%. Members were also advised that the planned introduction of the County Council composting plant was ahead of schedule.

The Committee was advised that the street cleansing service was performing well. The lower the percentage of detritus and litter found in samples the better the performance. East Herts Performance was 10% in 2007/08 (litter 2% and detritus 16%), 2008/09 performance had improved to 7% (litter 2% and 12%). Members were

advised that complaints in respect of street cleansing were down 2.2%.

The Head of Environmental Services stated that, although fly tipping had increased in recent years, there had been a 3.4% reduction last year. He commented that the Authority had taken significant levels of enforcement action against fly tipping. Members were advised that fly tipping could increase further as the recession deepened.

The Committee was advised that East Herts Officers had performed well in reporting abandoned vehicles to the contractor. The new contractor had improved performance to 100% of vehicles taken away within 24 hours. In respect of grounds maintenance, the new contractor had addressed machinery and staffing issues and performance was now very good.

In response to a query from Councillor A L Burlton, the Head of Environmental Services confirmed that Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) could be issued against people who sold vehicles on the highway, but only when 3 or more vehicles were parked in one area. In response to a further query from Councillor Burlton, the Head of Environmental Services undertook to e-mail the Committee details of the roads routinely cleaned in East Herts.

Councillor Mrs R F Cheswright commented on how Officers identified those responsible for a fly tip. The Committee was advised that warnings and FPNs were issued when a company was identified as responsible. Officers explained the process followed when dealing with offenders.

Councillor D Clark referred to the high costs involved with waste collections in East Herts. She stated that the Committee should have a closer look at these costs to understand why they were higher than other local authorities.

The Head of Environmental Services commented that a lot of work had been done to look at the Authority's waste collection costs compared to neighbouring authorities. He

stated that East Herts Council's waste collection costs were higher due to the large rural areas in the district. He commented that collections were less efficient due to the large distances between collections, the depot and the landfill site at Ugley or the Incinerator at Edmonton.

Councillor Clark stated that the high costs of waste collection in East Herts provided scope for a collective review of the service. The Committee was advised that a lot of work had already been done by the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership on this issue. The Head of Environmental Services made the point that costs are set by the current contract, which was scheduled to be re-tendered in 2011.

Councillor Clark commented that a review should take place now to consider fully the issue outside of the constraints of the tendering process. The Director of Customer and Community Services requested that the Head of Environment Services e-mail Councillor Clark a copy of a previously completed report on the issue of refuse collection costs across the county.

In response to a query from Councillor G McAndrew, the Head of Environmental Services commented that the current waste services contract would expire in May 2011. In response to a further query, the Committee was advised that the tender process lasted 9 months to a year and planning for this would start in the Autumn of 2009.

The Committee noted the update now submitted.

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

48 ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY HEALTHCHECK – JANUARY TO APRIL 2009

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

for January to April 2009.

The Committee was advised that EHPI 64, as detailed on page 8.5 of the report now submitted, should have been reported to Community Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Mrs M H Goldspink referred to page 8.42 of the report now submitted. She commented that developers should be encouraged to promote energy efficient building usage. The Director of Customer and Community Services advised that a task and finish group had recently evaluated and set the Council's corporate performance indicators.

Following a request from Councillor Goldspink, the Director confirmed that the group would consider including a performance indicator to support the objective of encouraging developers to promote energy efficient building usage.

Councillor D Clark commented that no historical data was available in respect of the percentage of household waste being sent to landfill. The Head of Environmental Services stated that performance was related to waste collected at the kerbside. He commented that this data was not comparable and there was limited control over the percentage of municipal waste that was sent to landfill.

Councillor Clark congratulated Planning and Building Control on performance against EHPI 2.10 (3) - re inspection of building sites within 3 months. She sought, and was given clarification on how the Authority defined the costs of household waste collections.

Councillor C B Woodward expressed concern that performance against NI 195b and NI195c was detailed as green although in his view Bishop's Stortford had a problem with fly posting.

The Head of Environmental Services confirmed that NI 195b related to detritus and NI 195c related to graffiti. He also advised that levels of fly posting were less than 1 percent based on 900 observations in the District.

Councillor N C Poulton reminded the Committee that the Authority could not remove literature posted on private property.

Councillor R H Beeching commented that he had a contact willing to take down unauthorised posters. The Head of Planning and Building Control stated that enforcement powers enabled East Herts Council to work with people in removing unauthorised fly posting. He commented however, that there should be a structured agreement subject to the same constraints imposed on East Herts Council. A third party assistant must be aware of such constraints.

The Committee received the report.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

49 WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10

The Committee considered items to be included in the work programme for 2009/10 and approved the programme now submitted, subject to the report on the review of fees and charges being submitted to the meeting on 15 September 2009.

The Scrutiny Officer referred to the dates for Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee that would be utilised for joint Scrutiny Committee meetings in 2010. She also commented that the Parking Manager had produced a report for the Department of Transport and was happy to share this with the Committee on 15 September 2009. The Committee rejected this suggestion but agreed for the report to be e-mailed to Members for noting.

The Scrutiny Officer reminded the Committee that a report on the Transport Strategy for East Herts would be submitted to the 1 December 2009 meeting of the Committee.

The Committee approved the work programme as now

submitted.

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

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm

Chairman

Date

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