

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
JOINT MEETING OF SCRUTINY
COMMITTEES HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY 16 FEBRUARY 2010, AT 7.30
PM

PRESENT: Councillor D Andrews (Chairman)
Councillors W Ashley, P R Ballam, R
Beeching, D Clark, N P Clark, R N Copping,
K Darby, A D Dodd, R Gilbert, P Grethe, J
Hedley, Mrs D L E Hollebon, G E Lawrence,
N C Poulton, J Mayes, J O Ranger, v Shaw,
J J Taylor, M Wood and C Woodward

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors M G Carver, L O Haysey and
P A Ruffles

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Anne Freimanis	- Chief Executive
Linda Bevan	- Committee Secretary
Cliff Cardoza	- Head of Environmental Services
Karl Chui	- Performance Officer
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
Alan Madin	- Director of Internal Services
Ceri Pettit	- Head of Strategic Direction (shared) and Performance Manager
George A Robertson	- Director of Customer and Community Services

Neil Sloper	- Head of Customer Services and New Media
Kevin Steptoe	- Head of Planning and Building Control

566 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors A L Burlton, M H Goldspink, D Hone, G McAndrew, D A A Peek and J Warren. It was noted that Councillor G E Lawrence was in attendance as a substitute for Councillor G McAndrew.

567 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor N P Clark declared a personal interest in M 571 – 2010/11 Service Plans (in relation to Local Development Framework) by virtue of his position as Secretary of the Stop Harlow North Campaign.

568 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman thanked Members for attending the recent lengthy Joint Scrutiny Committees meetings.

RESOLVED ITEMS

569 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

It was proposed by Councillor D L E Hollebon and seconded by Councillor C Woodward that Councillor D Andrews be appointed Chairman for the meeting.

RESOLVED - that Councillor D Andrews be appointed Chairman for the meeting.

570 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the Joint Scrutiny Committees held on 19 January 2010 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendments:

- Add Councillor R Beeching to the list of those present;
- N C Clark to read N P Clark
- M 493 Declarations of interest – delete “XXX” and insert M 497
- M 498 Fees and charges – add “Increases in “ before “Charges for removal of wasps nests”

571 2010/11 SERVICE PLANS

The Leader of the Council submitted a report on service plans for 2010/11. The Committee was invited to make recommendations on them to the Executive.

The Service Plans were produced every year by Heads of Service and set out the key actions that needed to be undertaken to deliver the corporate priorities and key objectives of the Council in line with the budget.

Councillor D Clark asked how the Committees could approve Service Plans for 2010/11 if they had not had an update on those for 2009/10.

Members considered the Plans and discussed the following:

1. 10-SD04 – Councillor M Wood asked how C3W would reduce the carbon footprint of the Council if more staff were travelling from Bishop’s Stortford to Hertford. It was explained that this would be achieved by home and remote working, having fewer buildings and changing processes to use less paper. It would take a number of years to establish the savings made. Councillor D Clark asked that any increase in carbon

footprint be included e.g. staff using energy in their homes as homeworkers.

2. 10-SD04 – Councillor N P Clark asked how Members could agree that the benefits of C3W had been achieved if those benefits had not been defined. These needed to be linked to services and projects as the Revenues and Benefits plan had been. Members were informed that within service plans there were C3W actions that would be undertaken within the coming year. Benefits would be identified and monitored as the programme proceeded through the services. Revenues and Benefits was the first service to use the benefits profile. Councillor N P Clark asked that the benefits profiles be circulated to all Members as they were defined.
3. 10-BSS05 – At the request of a Member, the Director of Internal Services agreed to circulate the finalised print review to Members.
4. 10-BSS09 – It was explained that the Corporate Resource Unit was part of Business Support.
5. 10-CC01 – In response to a question from Councillor N P Clark, the Director of Internal Services reassured Members that they would receive a business case for improvements to Castle Hall.
6. Members asked that improvements to roads, verges and street cleansing and litter clearing in villages be considered in villages as well as in Bishop's Stortford. Councillor N C Poulton suggested this could be considered by the Refuse and Recycling Task and Finish Group.
7. 10-CC07 - The Director of Internal Resources said the cost of pedestrianisation of North Street would be met from the budget for town centre improvements. The Director of Customer and Community Services said that an extension of the scheme to Saturday would

be considered following consultation after the Thursday scheme was introduced.

8. 10-CC08 – In response to a question from Councillor J O Ranger, the Scrutiny Officer said the next Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee would consider a business case for a hydro-electric power and solar panel energy system at Castle Hall.

9. 10-CC09 – Councillor W Ashley said a number of projects were under consideration under the Rural Business Development Programme.

10. 10-CC13 – Councillor V Shaw asked if the loss of funding for the Youth Development Officer would affect this action. The Director of Customer and Community Services assured Members this would not be the case. The aim was to contact young people in a way that suited them e.g. internet, blog, twitter. Councillor N P Clark asked Members be given a report on these proposals and the Director assured him this would be done.

11. 10-CC12 – Councillor M Wood commented that Community Voice needed to be revised. The Scrutiny Officer responded that Members had suggested public engagement should be reviewed as part of their future scrutiny work programme and this could include Community Voice.

12. 10-DLSS1 – The Director of Internal Services explained a legal officer would be the Chairman of the ASBO Committee in the future.

13. 10-DLSS7 – Councillor D Clark expressed her support for services helping communication between Members on non-key decisions etc.

14. 10-DLSS6 – Councillor J O Ranger said that it was important to let people know the result of their petitions particularly with the planned introduction of e-

petitions.

15. 10-ES19 – Concern was expressed that commercial waste was not recycled. The Head of Environmental Services explained this was not a statutory duty of the District Council. The Council could not legally operate such a service at a loss. The price for recycled materials was depressed and it would not be possible to break even at the moment. Extra vehicles and workers would be needed to collect commercial waste e.g. bottles from pubs. This service was offered by the private sector. Councillor N C Poulton said this could be considered by the Refuse and Recycling Task and Finish Group.

16. 10-ES18 – A Member asked about charging for the delivery of replacement wheelie bins if they were damaged by refuse collectors. The Head of Environmental Services said that this had been agreed previously by the Council.

17. 10-HH05 – Councillor C Woodward asked what was being done to monitor air quality at Hockerill, Bishop's Stortford. The Head of Strategic Direction (shared) and Performance Manager undertook to give a written reply.

18. 10-HH08 – The Chief Executive explained that "single conversation" was the phrase used by an external agency and related to discussions with authorities on housing investment such as affordable housing.

19. 10-HRO5 – Councillor J O Ranger expressed the need for the Council's Scrutiny Committees to be involved in Pathfinder initiatives in particular Human Resources. He asked that the protocol devised by the Task and Finish Group for Shared Services be used.

20. The Director of Internal Services confirmed that items with no details in the resources column of the

action plan would be met from existing resources.

21. 10-CS9 – The Head of Customer Services assured Members the website would be relaunched with significant improvements despite the numerous technical difficulties and delays encountered during the project.
22. 10-CS10 – Councillor N P Clark asked for a copy of the Project Initiation Document (PID) for the Herts Local Portal Project (part of Hertfordshire Customer Services Pathfinder work). The Head of Customer Services confirmed that it was being drafted and would be made available once finalised by the Pathfinder Group.
23. 10-PB08 – The Head of Planning and Building Control confirmed that the support provided would be the normal pre-application procedure only.
24. 10-RB2 – The Director of Internal Services said if this project was successful, similar shared services would be considered.

The Committee decided to recommend the approval of the service plan activity for 2010/11 but bring its comments to the attention of the Executive.

RESOLVED - that the Executive be informed of the Joint Scrutiny Committees comments as detailed above and that the Joint Scrutiny Committees consider the service plans should be approved.

572 2009/10 PERFORMANCE ESTIMATES AND FUTURE TARGETS

The Leader submitted a report setting out the performance indicators that the Council is required to monitor and publish annually in the Corporate Strategic Plan. The report advised Members of the estimated performance for 2009/10 and the targets for the next three years.

The Head of Strategic Direction (shared) and Performance Manager said that in the light of the financial pressures local government faced over the coming years, services had re-evaluated their functions so that performance reflected core priority areas of the Council and the available resource allocation. Services had worked on improving, reducing and retaining targets. The Head of Service explained the reasons why some data was not available for some performance indicators. Some additional information was circulated at the meeting.

The Committees considered the report and raised a number of issues. These included concern over targets for planning enforcement. It was felt these should more accurately reflect enforcement activity. The Head of Planning and Building Control said that work on improving the monitoring of this was in hand. It was also suggested that targets for dealing with empty houses could be lower in view of the new focus on tackling the most complex and longstanding cases.

On the targets for improvement, a Member asked about the deletion of a post in Building Control and was reassured that this would have minimal effect on the service. Another Member asked about the scrutiny of the complaints service which had been promised once sufficient data was available on the new system. He was assured this would be considered by the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee in June 2010.

Councillor N P Clark asked if any funding was being provided for swimming for over 60s when government funding of free swimming ended. The Director of Customer and Community Services said this was not the case but the new contractor had been set an improvement in this as part of its targets.

Councillor J O Ranger queried the high target relating to violent crime. It was explained that this would be amended when Police statistics for East Herts became available. The figure shown was for the whole County and the "allocation" to East Herts had not yet been set. The Member asked if

“perception” had been clearly defined in the questionnaire on crime and the Head of Service said this had not been the case.

Councillor N P Clark said the target for fatal road accidents should be zero and Members agreed. As this was a County Council target, Officers would relay the Committees’ views.

Councillor N P Clark asked for more details of the removal of fly tips where this took longer than a week. The Head of Environmental Services undertook to provide this. In response to questions, he added that the District Council did remove fly tips which were just off the highway although the obligation was to remove them from the highway only.

Councillor A Dodd emphasised the need to remove unsightly fly posting.

Members decided to make the comments now detailed to the Executive.

RESOLVED - that the Executive be informed that the Joint Scrutiny Committees:

- (A) note the performance estimates that are available for 2009/10;
- (B) have considered the indicators listed in paragraph 3.3 and 3.4 of the report now submitted and have no suggestions for redirection of resources at the present time;
- (C) with regard to paragraph 4.1 and 4.3 of the report now submitted suggest the figures on serious crime figures be amended to reflect the situation in East Herts and the target for fatal road accidents be set at zero;
- (D) considers the new local measures set out in paragraph 5.11 should be supported;

(E) note the quality spot checks that are currently being undertaken as detailed in paragraph 6.3 of the report;

(F) note that where data is still outstanding (taking into account additional information circulated at the meeting) as detailed in paragraph 7.1 and 7.3 further updates will be included in the 2009/10 outturn report due to be presented to Corporate Business Committee on 1 June 2010.

The meeting closed at 9.40 pm

Chairman
Date