

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
JOINT MEETING OF SCRUTINY
COMMITTEES HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY 15 FEBRUARY 2011, AT 7.00
PM

PRESENT: Councillor D Andrews (Chairman)
Councillors W Ashley, P R Ballam,
R Beeching, R N Copping, A D Dodd,
R Gilbert, P Grethe, J Hedley,
Mrs D L E Hollebon, G E Lawrence, J Mayes,
G McAndrew, M Newman, N C Poulton,
V Shaw, R I Taylor and C Woodward

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors S A Bull, P A Ruffles, S Rutland-
Barsby and N Wilson

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Linda Bevan	- Committee Secretary
Karl Chui	- Performance Office (Strategic Direction)
Philip Hamberger	- Programme Director of Change
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

559 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

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

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

560 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors K Darby, Mrs M H Goldspink, D Hone, J J Taylor, D A A Peek, J O Ranger, M Wood and B Wrangles. It was noted that Councillor R I Taylor was in attendance as a substitute for Councillor M Wood.

561 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2011 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

562 2011/12 SERVICE PLANS

The Leader of the Council submitted a report on Service Plans for 2011/12. 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.

Members raised queries on a number of issues which were addressed by the Officers present. These included savings

on IT and Facilities (additional savings could be obtained through shared services); minimising use of paper by Members (this would be considered by the ICT/C3W Member Group); the slow operation of Members' computers (investment was being made in servers to improve this); and, increasing the amount recycled (it was hoped including mixed plastics from May 2011 would encourage more recycling generally).

Officers undertook to give written replies on how many people had replied to the residents' survey in terms of the percentage that consider the Council provides VFM (to Councillor J Mayes), whether the affordable homes target for the District is realistic (to Councillor R Beeching) and details of what was entailed in 11 - LCS02 (Reduce costs or improve VFM (Value for Money) by identifying and implementing an improved structure for Environmental Health and Licensing and Community Safety Services to meet the challenges of the MTFP (Medium Term Financial Plan) and its relationship to the review of Community Safety (to Councillor M Newman).

The Joint Committees decided to recommend approval to the Executive of the Service Plan activity for 2010/11.

RESOLVED – that the Executive be informed that the Joint Scrutiny Committees consider the Service Plan activity for 2011/12 now submitted should be approved.

563 2010/11 ESTIMATES AND FUTURE TARGETS

The Leader submitted a report on performance indicators that the Council was required to monitor and publish annually in the Annual Report. The report advised Members of estimated performance for 2010/11 and the targets for the next three years.

The Government had announced a number of changes to reduce bureaucracy and central government burdens and to save money. In the light of this, East Herts Council would retain a performance framework reflective of local priorities

and concerns.

Officers had undertaken a review of the basket of indicators and had proposed a refined list, reducing the set from 143 to 86. As Services have re-evaluated their day-to-day functions/operations to focus resources and service delivery on core priority areas and be customer focused, the performance indicators have been chosen to reflect this.

Members considered the report and raised a number of concerns.

Councillor N C Poulton asked that the PIs proposed by the Task and Finish Group for Planning Enforcement and currently under a 1 year 'trial' be included once they were finalised and Officers undertook to do this.

Councillors J Hedley and R Gilbert asked about targets for employing people with disabilities. Officers assured them this was carefully monitored.

Councillor N C Poulton also queried the lack of difference between "target" and "stretch target" figures in the report. It was explained that the heading "stretch targets", i.e. more aspirational targets, had been included when the economic situation had been more favourable than currently.

Members expressed disappointment that information from the Place Survey would no longer be available to give information on residents' views and perceptions, e.g. on care for the elderly and participation in sport. However, they acknowledged the need to focus on areas the District could affect directly. It was pointed out that the Council's Residents' Survey was carried out every two years and any question thought important enough could be considered for inclusion within that exercise. However, without the national Place Survey, these figures would stand in isolation as there would be no comparison with other authorities.

The Joint Committees decided to make the comments detailed below to the Executive.

RESOLVED - that the Executive be informed that the Joint Scrutiny Committees have the following comments on the 2010/11 Estimates and future targets:

(A) the estimates for 2010/11 be noted;

(B) the refined list of performance indicators that are either being retained or deleted (paragraph 1.7 of the report now submitted) should be approved by the Executive;

(C) no further resources should be invested to improve the potential 2010/11 outturn position in order to meet current targets, as detailed at paragraphs 3.3, 3.4 and 4.2 of the report now submitted;

(D) the targets set out in paragraph 5.1 – 5.3 of the report submitted to either improve, reduce or retain performance should be approved by the Executive;

(E) the adoption of the new local measures set out in paragraph 6.1 of the report submitted (including those arising from the Task and Finish Group on Planning Enforcement) should be supported by the Executive;

(F) the data quality spot checks that are currently being undertaken, as detailed at paragraph 7.3 of the report be noted;

(G) the fact that unit cost indicators are not included in the list of PI estimates and targets, as detailed at paragraph 8.1 of the report, be noted; and

(H) the changes to the 2009/10 performance outturns for the leisure performance indicators, as detailed at paragraph 9.1 - 9.3 of the report, be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.10 pm

Chairman
Date