

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE WAYTEMORE ROOM,
COUNCIL OFFICES, THE CAUSEWAY,
BISHOP'S STORTFORD ON TUESDAY 14
SEPTEMBER 2010, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor D A A Peek (Chairman)
Councillors W Ashley, R Beeching,
Mrs M H Goldspink, G McAndrew,
A L Warman and G E Lawrence

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors M Wood

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Committee Secretary
Cliff Cardoza	- Head of Environmental Services
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
Andrew Pulham	- Parking Manager
George A Robertson	- Director of Customer and Community Services
Trevor Watkins	- Waste Services Manager

247 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of the Chairman Councillor Mrs D L E Hollebon and Councillors D Clark, P Grethe, N C Poulton and B M Wrangles. It was noted that Councillor R Beeching was in attendance as substitute for Councillor B M Wrangles and Councillor G E Lawrence was in attendance as substitute for Councillor P Grethe.

248 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor D A A Peek stated that the Chairman had been in hospital for a period of time. Members asked that their good wishes be forwarded to Councillor Mrs D L E Hollebon for a speedy recovery.

Councillor D A A Peek stated that the acoustics in the Waytemore Room were unacceptable and of the constant difficulties he had with the loop system. He asked those in attendance to speak up.

249 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor D A A Peek declared a personal interest in Minutes 255 - Autumn Leaf Fall Clearance and 256 - Weed Control Service, by virtue of the fact that he was a Hertfordshire County Councillor and of the likelihood that these issues would be discussed further from a financial perspective by Hertfordshire County Council.

250 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2010 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2010, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

251 TRANSPORT AND PARKING STRATEGY PRESENTATION
- UPDATE AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Andrew Pulham gave a presentation on the Parking and Transport Strategy for East Hertfordshire. Presentations were being given throughout the District including at Community Voice meetings.

It was noted that the work being undertaken by East Herts, would complement and dovetail with the work also being undertaken in relation to Hertfordshire County Council's third

Local Transport Policy and would influence transport county-wide for the next 20 years. The East Herts Strategy would be tailored to East Herts and reconcile conflicting objectives. A questionnaire had been produced and circulated in the Link Magazine and could also be completed online. The consultation process was explained, the intention being to publish the final strategy in June 2011.

The Chairman, on behalf of Members, thanked Officers for the presentation and the work undertaken so far and for ensuring the Community and Parish Councils were involved in the process.

RESOLVED – that the presentation be noted.

252 THE "GRANGE PADDOCKS PROJECT" - REVENUE AND CAPITAL IMPLICATIONS

The Director of Customer and Community Services reminded Members that the report now submitted along with a number of other reports included elsewhere on the agenda had been requested by Members within the context of making savings in relation to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTPF).

The report now submitted set out the rationale for planned changes to parking arrangements in Bishop's Stortford and expenditure and income assumptions.

Councillor Mrs M H Goldspink was disappointed at the possibility that the Council might not renew the lease of Apton Road Car Park. She felt that it was a useful car park and the Town would suffer if it was lost. She asked what revenue the car park generated. The Parking Manager stated that revenue was approximately £12,000 per year but was unable to state what the net income was, adding that the car park generated a surplus.

Councillor Mrs M H Goldspink referred to the changes in the current parking arrangements for Bishop's Stortford and supported the implementation of a Residents' Permit Parking Scheme in the "Chantry" area of Bishop's Stortford. She

queried whether the parking proposals nearby and including Rye Street, would impact negatively on the Chantry Road scheme. Officers stated that residents in the area fully supported a Residents' Permit Parking Scheme as the scheme would protect and preserve kerbside spaces. The Parking Manager explained the segregated use of some car parks including Rye Street.

Councillor G A McAndrew asked about the sense of relinquishing Apton Road car park which made a profit and he also stated that if South Street was pedestrianised, Apton Road would make an ideal car park. The Director of Customer and Community Services said that Apton Road had to be taken in context with a whole host of other issues around the car park, including the fact that it needed £200,000 to be spent on it to make it a reasonable car park. The car park also drew in traffic into what was a mainly pedestrianised area. The Director of Customer and Community Services stated that members would have a further report for consideration before any decisions were taken in relation to Apton Road Car Park.

Councillor R Beeching referred to the proposal to introduce long stay parking at Grange Paddocks and Rye Street. Officers explained that it was short distance to the Town Centre and of proposals to upgrade the area and include lighting. The Director of Customer and Community Services referred to the lack of long stay places in the town especially for people using the station.

In response to a query from Councillor G McAndrew about the Riverside walkway, the Director confirmed that the walkway would be upgraded with lighting and the possibility of a cycle way alongside was supported by all Members.

In scrutinising proposals within the Medium Term Financial Plan, the Committee indicated their general support for the scheme as detailed in the report now submitted and asked that Members' comments, summarised below, be referred to Council.

RESOLVED – that (A) Environment Scrutiny support the scheme as detailed in the report now submitted and that Council be advised of the following;

(B) the need to review proposals for Apton Road Car Park;

(C) the need to upgrade the Riverside walkway including the provision of a Cycle Path; and

(D) the need to protect residents' parking in Rye Street, Bishop's Stortford.

253 EVALUATION AND AWARD OF PARKING ENFORCEMENT AND MANAGEMENT CONTRACT

The Director of Customer and Community Services submitted a report on arrangements around the new parking enforcement and management contract, the detail of which was set out in the report now submitted. It was noted that the current contract would expire on 15 January 2012.

In order to ensure that the qualitative aspects were addressed, Officers sought support to award the new contract on the basis of a 50% price and 50% quality split. This new form of contract was devised by the British Parking Association and recommended by the Department of Transport. He explained how the new partnership approach would work, including how monitoring would occur using around 25 Key Performance Indicators which were still to be finalised. The focus would be on quality and innovative ways of working.

In response to queries from Councillors G McAndrew and Mrs M H Goldspink, Officers explained how the contract differed from conventional contracts and how parking officers' roles would be evaluated.

In response to a query from Councillor Mrs M H Goldspink as to why the Council had used a specialist consultant, the Director of Customer and Community Services acknowledged

the very good work done by Officers. He stated that this type of contract went out to tender every 10 years and the market was prone to substantial change and movement during this time. As such, the use of consultants helped the Council to manage risk, provide current market knowledge and provide timely information on procurement legislation. The East Herts share of consultant's costs was approximately £18,000.

The Committee supported the report as now submitted.

RESOLVED – that the Executive be advised that (A) the use of the BPA Model Contract in the tendering process be acknowledged;

(B) the use of a 50% price and 50% quality mix in awarding the contract be supported; and

(C) the formula for evaluating the tenders be supported.

254 RECYCLING BANKS: IMPLICATIONS OF ACHIEVING MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN SAVINGS

The Head of Environmental Services submitted a report on the options and implications of continuing or ceasing the provision of bring site recycling banks for some materials.

The Head of Environmental Services reminded Members that the report now submitted was one of three reports requested by Members, detailed elsewhere on the agenda, which sought to achieve savings within the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Of the options put forward, the removal of the provision of recycling banks for those materials which operated at a deficit, savings of £44,000 could be achieved in the MTFP for 2011/12, e.g. glass banks operated with a deficit of £14,000; can banks £9,000 and plastic bottle banks £21,000. Paper banks operated at a surplus and it was therefore proposed to continue with these. It was also noted that following the introduction of ARC (Alternate Refuse Collection), the frequency of collections had been reduced resulting in budget

saving of £20,000. Savings within the MTFP could be achieved totalling £64,000.

It was noted that this proposal would be likely to generate some public dissatisfaction from residents that use the banks and in particular from communal properties which cannot receive the full range of Kerbside Recycling Services. There were approximately 9000 communal properties in the district and approximately half of these would not be able to receive kerbside services, mainly due to insufficient space to store bins. If the banks were removed, these residents could either dispose of their recyclables at the County Council's household waste recycling centres, or place them in the domestic waste.

Councillor Mrs M H Goldspink expressed concern about the possibility of losing recycling banks altogether, especially since the frequency of collections had been reduced and was concerned that their loss might send out the message that East Herts was not serious about recycling. The Head of Environmental Services reminded Members that reductions to the frequency of collections would generate £20,000 in savings and of the marginal effects withdrawal of some recycling banks (e.g. glass, cans and plastics) would have on the estimated recycling rate. He explained that there was very little scope to reduce the frequency of collection of these materials to make any further savings. Officers explained which materials were marketable and which were not.

Members received the report and requested that Council be informed that Environment Scrutiny Committee supports the withdrawal of all plastic, glass and can recycling banks.

RESOLVED – that Council be informed that Environment Scrutiny Committee supports the withdrawal of all plastic, glass and can recycling banks.

255 AUTUMN LEAF FALL CLEARANCE: IMPLICATIONS OF ACHIEVING MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN SAVINGS

The Head of Environmental Services submitted a report on the implications of ceasing the autumn leaf clearance

programme. It was noted that keeping the highways clear and safe was statutory function of the County Council as the Highways Authority. It was noted that by ceasing leaf clearance, the Council could save £53,750.

Members considered the impact ceasing leaf clearance might have on villages / parishes; and the hazards this might cause for the elderly and children walking to school in leafy areas. It was noted that leaves could cause blockages to drains, especially in areas susceptible to flooding. The Council's responsibility in relation to land drainage was explained.

It was noted that the implementation of this option would be unpopular with residents during the autumn months.

Of the options set out the report now submitted, Members agreed that the Council should cease leaf clearance except on those 19 roads identified in the report now submitted, where there was a higher risk of flooding and that Council be advised accordingly.

RESOLVED - that Council be informed that Environment Scrutiny Committee supports an option to focus leaf clearance only on those roads where there was a higher risk of flooding.

256 WEED CONTROL SERVICE: IMPLICATIONS OF ACHIEVING MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN SAVINGS

The Head of Environmental Services submitted a report concerning the weed control service and what savings might be achieved by a cessation of the service.

It was noted that Hertfordshire County Council was responsible for the maintenance of adopted roads and pavement surfaces, but that East Herts Council decided to introduce a discretionary weed spraying service in 2005 following a Best Value Review of environmental standards. The annual budget cost for the service was £30,000 and no funding was received from the County Council for providing this service.

The Head of Environmental Services explained that of the 10 District Councils in the County, eight had reached agreements from the County Council that they would provide a contribution towards weed spraying.

Members received the report and supported a proposal to provide the weed control service if Hertfordshire County Council provided the majority of funding needed and that Council be advised accordingly.

RESOLVED - that Council be informed that Environment Scrutiny Committee supports an option to provide the weed control service if Hertfordshire County Council provided the majority of funding.

257 ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY HEALTH CHECK - FROM MAY TO JULY 2010

The Director of Customer and Community Services submitted a report on the performance of key indicators for the period May to July 2010.

The Director of Customer and Community Services provided clarification of the wording in relation to Performance Indicators EHP18.48 (Net cost of Domestic Refuse Collection per properties) and EHP18.49 (Net cost of Recycling per collections per annum) and agreed to ask Officers to amend this description.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

258 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2010/11

The Committee considered items to be included in the work programme for 2010/11. The Scrutiny Officer referred to the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership Alternative Financial Model report which needed to be included for the November 2010 meeting.

The Director of Customer and Community Services advised

that he would be meeting with Directors from Broxbourne, Stevenage, Welwyn Garden City and Hertsmere to consider a potential joint scrutiny review in relation to highways matters.

An update was also provided in relation to the Hertford Theatre Hydro Project. It was anticipated that Officers would report back on this matter to Members in November 2010.

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

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm

Chairman
Date