

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE WAYTEMORE ROOM,
COUNCIL OFFICES, THE CAUSEWAY,
BISHOP'S STORTFORD ON TUESDAY 16
NOVEMBER 2010, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs D L E Hollebon (Chairman)
Councillors W Ashley, Mrs M H Goldspink,
P Grethe, G McAndrew, D A A Peek,
N C Poulton and R Beeching

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors M R Alexander

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Committee Secretary
Cliff Cardoza	- Head of Environmental Services
Dave Cooper	- Performance Officer
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
George A Robertson	- Director of Customer and Community Services
David Thorogood	- Environmental Co-Ordinator

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

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370 APOLOGY

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor B Wrangles. It was noted that Councillor R Beeching was

substituting for Councillor B Wrangles.

371 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 September be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

372 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman stated that earlier this year, this Committee had commissioned a Task and Finish Group to advise on the design of the Refuse, Recycling and Street Cleansing Contract. Members were reminded of the services which they wished the contract to deliver and a proposed number of options for consideration once tendered prices were known. These proposals were subsequently agreed by the Council and included within tender documents.

The Chairman advised that following an extensive procurement exercise, the contract has been awarded to Veolia Environmental Services Ltd. Veolia was a major UK waste management company and was successfully providing these services at a number of similar rural district councils, including at North Herts and Harlow.

The new contract would result in a saving to the Council of approximately £1.5m per annum. This was in no small part thanks to the residents of East Herts, who under the ARC scheme, had recycled substantially more and reduced the amount of waste they produced.

Due to the timing of the award, it was not possible to bring back a report to this meeting, however, the options available to the Council would be considered at an Executive meeting on 1 December, 2010. It was important that decisions on these options were reached as soon as possible to allow the new contractor to procure resources in time for the contract start up on 1 May 2011. The papers would be available at the end of this week and Members were encouraged to look at these and make their views known to the Executive.

The Chairman added that if any Member had any doubts about the value of Task and Finish Groups then this result should dispel them.

The Chairman referred to her response to a letter from the member of the public regarding Vantorts Park which had been sent to every member on the Committee.

373 2010/11 SERVICE PLANS - SUMMARY OF PROGRESS AND EXCEPTIONS REPORT

The Leader of the Council submitted a summary of 2010/11 Service Plan actions relevant to Environment Scrutiny Committee which had been achieved and details of those which had had their completion dates revised.

The Performance Officer confirmed that good progress had been made so far with four actions being achieved, 22 were on target, one project had been cancelled and two actions had had their completion dates revised, the detail of which was set out in the report now submitted.

Councillor Mrs M H Goldspink referred to the Service Plan Actions and the need to improve the parks and open spaces to meet the needs of residents. Whilst she was delighted with the work done so far, she queried whether the Council could be more proactive in finding other spaces which could become play spaces. She referred to the Local Development Framework which also mentioned the shortage of open space play areas. The Head of Environmental Services acknowledged that there was a shortage of some play spaces. He referred to action taken by the Council in the past to comply with legislative Planning Policy requirements (PPG17) to identify leisure and amenity land provided by both public and private sector. It was found that there were some areas short of certain types of spaces and that other areas had enough provision. As a result of this work findings had been incorporated into Planning Policies. The Council's policy was that it would only provide additional play spaces where these were externally funded, e.g. through Section 106

Agreements ('planning gain') and the process for this was explained. The Head of Environmental Services said that he would report back to Members detailing what progress was being made within the parks and open spaces development programme.

The Committee received the report and asked Officers to report back on the development programme on Parks and Open Spaces including the use of Section 106 Planning Gain to secure open space development.

RESOLVED – that (A) the summary of progress against the 2010/11 Service Plan actions be noted including those actions which had had their completion dates revised; and

(B) Officers report back on the development of Parks and Open Spaces including use of Section 106 Planning Gain to secure open spaces.

374 CASTLE WEIR MICRO HYDRO SCHEME

The Executive Member for Community Safety and submitted a report on a proposal to install a micro hydro generation scheme at Castle Weir, Hertford. A presentation outlining the benefits of the proposals was provided by the Environmental Coordinator.

The benefits of the two hydro systems: Kaplan propeller and Archimedes screw were considered. The Kaplan system was considered preferential because of its ability to take account of low and variable flows and the fact that it could increase the height of the water to make it run faster and thus generate more electricity. Total costs for the installation of the scheme were between £157,500 to £165,000, but these costs would be offset by the fact that the scheme would pay for itself within seven to seven and a half years. Further, once the capital had been repaid, the Council would achieve income of around £300,000 over the remaining 13 years of the life of the project. Officers explained the levels of electricity to be generated and that any excess could be fed into the National Grid.

In addition to providing power for Hertford Theatre, the system would impact positively on reducing the levels of CO2 generated in that it would create a saving of 60 tons. This supported the Council's objectives as agreed in the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan. The Council was also required to report its CO2 figures to the Government.

The Environmental Coordinator commented that this would be one of the first examples of a community theatre in the UK to be powered directly and substantially by hydro electricity.

Councillor Mrs M H Goldspink welcomed the proposal and the efforts made by Officers in moving this forward. She was reassured by Officers, that any fish caught within the mechanism would be safely returned to the river.

Councillor P Grethe referred to items such as shopping trolleys and hoovers which had in the past, been discarded in the Weir and of the damaging effects this could have on the "Trash Screen". The Environmental Coordinator explained that the Trash Screen was protected by a grid. He further stated that the system was largely enclosed and would be protected from vandalism.

Councillor N C Poulton queried whether any trash gathered within the screen, would generate any additional cost to the Council in terms of maintenance. The Environmental Coordinator explained that the Council already had a contract with a company whose function it was to clear various grills and screens in water courses and that this, if necessary, would be picked up within the Council's current arrangements.

Councillor R Beeching referred to levels of electricity to be generated and supported the Kaplan hydro system at this location.

Councillor G McAndrew queried the financial projections and what might happen should the river levels fall. The Environmental Coordinator explained that the figures presented had been based on low flows and agreed that flows

might change.

Councillor D A A Peek supported the proposal. He stated that the income generated might even be better than anticipated which was to be welcomed in today's economic climate.

The Executive Member for Community Safety and Protection stated that the project was an "invest to save" one referring to the payback period of approximately 7 years. He praised Officers for their work in moving the initiative forward and hoped that it would be supported by the Executive.

Members supported the proposal.

RESOLVED – that (A) the business case for the design and build of a micro hydro scheme at Castle Weir, Hertford be received; and

(B) the proposal be supported and referred to the Executive on 1 December 2010.

375 REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY - PROGRESS WITH ACTION PLAN

The Executive Member for Community Safety and Protection submitted a report on the progress made to date, with the Action Plan in relation to local environmental quality. The Head of Environmental Services gave a short presentation to illustrate the impact of the works undertaken which had been achieved working in partnership with a number of outside bodies.

Councillor G McAndrew praised the work undertaken. He referred to Bishop's Park and land not yet adopted and of ongoing problems there. The Head of Environmental Services agreed to investigate the matter and write to the Member.

Councillor D A A Peek welcomed the report and specifically the work with Ware in Bloom given the minor cost involved. He referred to inappropriate planting in relation to new

planning developments e.g. Field Maples and the costs this caused in terms of leaf clearance and cutting back once these trees matured.

The Chairman, on behalf of Members, thanked Officers for their work and asked that further updates on Environmental Quality be including within the Annual Update provided by the Head of Environmental Services.

RESOLVED – that (A) the progress on the Environmental Quality Action Plan be noted; and

(B) further updates on the Action Plan be included within the Annual Update.

376 HERTFORDSHIRE WASTE PARTNERSHIP - ALTERNATIVE FINANCIAL MODEL

The Executive Member for Community Safety and Protection submitted a report on the workings of the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership's Alternative Financial Model (AFM), the detail of which was set out in the report now submitted. It was noted that the AFM scheme had been established via the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership (HWP) to provide financial incentives to reward Districts to achieve recycling targets and reduce black bin waste.

The Head of Environmental Services stated that the Council had benefitted significantly from the original recycling credits scheme. However, the need to recycle more to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill and address rising costs had resulted in the Partnership developing an 'Alternative Financial Model'. The aim was to help District councils to invest in recycling infrastructure by passing on cost savings made by the County Council from reducing waste to landfill. This had helped East Herts Council develop new recycling and composting services and contributed to the achievement of recycling rates of over 50%.

In 2009 it had become apparent that the model was producing some imbalances to some Authorities in the way that it

rewarded comparative performance. As a result, the model had been reviewed by the Waste Partnership to provide a fairer allocation from 2011 and this had been agreed by all partners earlier this year. It was noted that the Council would receive approximately £700,000 in 2010/11 and between £350,000 and £450,000 in 2011/12 and 2012/13, subject to continued good performance.

The Director of Customer and Community Services stated that the model was complicated. He explained that although income to East Herts would reduce, it was understood that this was necessary to incentivise other councils to improve their recycling rates. This would deliver benefits for Hertfordshire as a whole.

Councillor P Grethe asked what progress had been made regarding a waste incinerator. The Head of Environmental Services explained that progress was still ongoing by the County Council to procure an incinerator plant.

Members received the report.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

377 ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY HEALTH CHECK - AUGUST 2010 TO SEPTEMBER 2010

The Director of Customer and Community Services submitted a report on the performance of key indicators relating to Environment Scrutiny during the period August to September 2010. The detail was set out in the report now submitted. The Director explained that the only issue of performance concern referred to parking enforcement and that this was attributable to an increase in tickets issued and staff absences.

Councillor Mrs M H Goldspink stated that the terminology used in relation to EHP17.0 and elsewhere within the appendices i.e. working days / months conflicted and caused confusion. She asked Officers to review the matter. The Director of Customer and Community Services agreed to

review the descriptions and speak to Officers.

In response to a query from Councillor G McAndrew regarding parking attendants being made aware of double yellow lines, the Director of Customer and Community Services explained that parking officers were notified when Traffic Regulation Orders were made.

Members received the report.

RESOLVED – that (A) the report be received; and

(B) Officers clarify the terminology within the report.

378 ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2010/11

The Committee considered items to be included in the work programme for 2010/11. The Chairman drew Members' attention to the online budget consultation which would run from 1 - 26 November 2010. She encouraged Members to contribute to the process.

The Scrutiny Officer referred to the programme for the next meeting and the fact that Members would be receiving two substantial reports in relation to the East Herts Transport and Parking Strategy and Climate Change – Progress Against Action Plan. The Scrutiny Officer drew Members' attention to the fact that there would be two Joint Scrutiny Committees on 27 January and 3 February 2011 to consider service plans and the budget.

The Director of Customer and Community Services explained what progress had been made concerning discussions with the County Council in terms of enhancing the scrutiny process in relation to highways matters and the Borough/District Councils' input so that Members could have more influence on how the Discretionary Budget was spent. Following discussions with the County Council he had established that they were trialling a model whereby a larger proportion of the

highway budget would be allocated to the County Member according to the population size in that area and managed by the District Member.

Councillor N C Poulton referred to the geographic size of East Hertfordshire and that its' share of the budget was disproportionate in relation to the mileage of roads.

RESOLVED – that the work programme be noted and amended to include the additions raised earlier in the meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.40 pm

Chairman
Date