

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
JOINT MEETING OF SCRUTINY
COMMITTEES HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY 14 FEBRUARY 2012, AT 7.00
PM

PRESENT: Councillor David Andrews (Chairman)
Councillors D Abbott, W Ashley, S Basra,
E Bedford, R Beeching, S Bull, K Crofton,
T Herbert, J Mayes, G McAndrew, P Moore,
W Mortimer, P Phillips, M Pope, J Ranger,
C Rowley, P Ruffles, N Symonds,
G Williamson, J Wing, M Wood and J Wyllie

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors P Ballam and M Carver

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

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| Simon Drinkwater | - Director of Neighbourhood Services |
| Lorna Georgiou | - Performance and Improvement Co- ordinator |
| Marian Langley | - Scrutiny Officer |
| Alan Madin | - Director of Internal Services |
| Peter Mannings | - Democratic Services Officer |
| George A Robertson | - Director of Customer and Community Services |

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

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608 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

It was proposed by Councillor G McAndrew and seconded by Councillor J Ranger that Councillor D Andrews be appointed Chairman for the meeting.

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

609 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors E Buckmaster, P Gray, D Hollebon, Mrs D Hone, G Jones, T Page and C Woodward. It was noted that Councillor K Crofton was in attendance as a substitute for Councillor Jones.

610 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

611 2011 RESIDENTS SURVEY ANALYSIS AND ACTION PLAN

The Leader submitted a report on the results of the 2011 Residents Survey. The Committees were requested to identify a number of priority issues arising from the survey on which Officers would develop an action plan for consideration by the Executive.

Councillor J Ranger stated that Officers should focus on affordable housing provision and particular focus should be given to any new ideas and initiatives regarding this issue.

Councillor G McAndrew emphasised that affordable housing should be realistically 'affordable' and must be of a decent standard and fit for purpose. Members also commented that they were keen to see whether the

Choice Based Lettings points system could be amended so more points were awarded for a sub-district level connection with the area/village location being requested.

Councillor M Wood commented that more financial support should be given to house builders to ensure that affordable housing provision actually took place across the District. Councillor P Phillips stressed the importance of activities for teenagers to alleviate problems of anti-social behaviour.

Councillor R Beeching referred to the switching off of street lighting planned for next year. He referred in particular to the numbers of residents who had indicated they did not feel safe after dark and also on the number of residents being adversely affected by teenagers congregating and instances of drunk or rowdy behaviour in public places.

Councillor Beeching stated that he was pleased to see the high satisfaction residents had expressed in relation to refuse collection and recycling in East Herts. He commented that there should be no change to Alternate Refuse Collections (ARC) and any suggestions to revert to weekly collections should be resisted.

Councillor Ranger stated that Officers should carefully consider the poor satisfaction rating in terms of the public perception of how the Council dealt with complaints. He stressed that he was concerned over how dissatisfied residents appeared to be with how long the Authority took to respond to complaints.

Councillor D Andrews commented that the survey seemed to indicate that some residents felt that the Authority was not doing enough to communicate with residents and publicise the Council's functions across East Herts.

RESOLVED – that the Executive be informed that the Joint Scrutiny Committees had the following

comments:

(A) the ORS Residents Survey Report be noted;

(B) the following priority areas for further investigation by Officers be approved:

- the Government's ideas in relation to the provision of decent and suitable affordable housing;
- whether the choice based lettings scheme should be amended so there was a greater emphasis on the awarding of points on a more local basis than the District level;
- the provision of more activities for teenagers to address issues of teenagers congregating and causing anti-social behaviour;
- reiterating that there should be no move back to weekly refuse collections and more work should be undertaken to improve the situation regarding increasing recycling facilities for flats;
- addressing the high level of dissatisfaction of residents in respect of complaints and the time taken for the Authority to respond;
- whether more could be done to address residents' views that the Authority should do more to engage with residents and publicise the Council's activities; and

(C) Officers be requested to develop an action plan in response to the priorities identified by the Joint Scrutiny Committees.

The Leader of the Council submitted a report on Service Plans for 2012/13. 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.

The Committees were invited to make recommendations to the Executive.

Councillor P Phillips commented that many of the service plan objectives, as currently worded, would be difficult to measure and hard to prove successful completion.

Councillor J Mayes commented that some of the target dates detailed in the service plans suggested an unnecessary amount of time before the commencement of work to complete the actions concerned.

Members were reminded that the service plan activity would be undertaken throughout the year and Officers intended the work to be completed by the due dates detailed in the report now submitted.

Councillor J Ranger stated there the Authority should consider more collaboration with other Local Authorities in respect of procurement activity. He cited an example of three Authorities in west Hertfordshire that had merged all activities in relation to procurement.

In response to a further query from Councillor Ranger, the Director of Neighbourhood Services advised that local fee setting for planning applications was the result of suggested changes from central government that would allow local Authorities to independently set fees for the submission of planning applications. Members were reminded that 'local' in this respect referred to District-wide not town by town.

Councillor M Pope emphasised that there should be a joint approach to addressing problems with litter

associated with fast food outlets across the District. Councillors P Phillips and M Wood both highlighted the problems resulting from the lack of leaf clearance activity in East Herts.

The Joint Committees decided to recommend approval to the Executive of the Service Plan activity for 2010/11, subject to consideration of 3 additional areas of activity now detailed.

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

(B) the outcomes detailed in the Service Plans should be more measurable;

(C) opportunities should be explored for a joint approach to litter clearance activities in the vicinity of fast food outlets; and

(D) Officers should explore cooperative and partnership approaches to timely litter and leaf clearance across the District.

613 2011/12 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 2011/12 and the targets for the next three years.

Members were advised that the future targets section of the report had been submitted on the basis that only some of the targets would be for improved performance whilst others were for a reduction and some targets called for no change.

The Scrutiny Committees were advised that the

Performance Team often carried out a spot check against certain Performance Indicators (PIs) in order to maintain standards in respect of data quality.

Councillor N Symonds commented that the Authority should liaise with job agencies and other recruitment sources to improve performance relating to employing people with disabilities. Councillor J Mayes stated that this was an issue that was largely beyond the control of the Authority.

Councillor R Beeching stated his concerns in respect of the anticipated outturn of 57% against a target of 85% for EHPI 2.15 – Health and Safety Inspections. The Director of Neighbourhood Services advised that he expected the predicted outturn to improve. He reassured Members that all of the high risk premises inspections would take place and a better breakdown of the figures would be presented to Members in future.

The Joint Committees decided to make the comments now detailed 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 2011/12 be noted;
- (B) the data quality spot checks detailed in paragraph 6.3 of the report now submitted, be noted;
- (C) the targets detailed in paragraphs 5.1 – 5.3 of the report submitted to either improve, reduce or retain performance, be approved; and
- (D) the Unit Cost indicators detailed in paragraph 7.1 of the report submitted should not be included in the list of PI estimates and targets.

The meeting closed at 8.40 pm

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| Chairman |
| Date |