

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON TUESDAY
26 FEBRUARY 2013, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor D Abbott (Chairman).
Councillors W Ashley, E Buckmaster,
P Gray, B Wrangles and J Wyllie.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors M Alexander, S Bull, M Newman
and P Ruffles.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Democratic Services Officer
Cliff Cardoza	- Head of Environmental Services
Nick Kirby	- Environmental Inspection Team Manager
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
George A Robertson	- Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services
Ian Sharratt	- Environmental Manager
Trevor Watkins	- Waste Services Manager

612 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

613 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman, with Members' consent, agreed to change the order of agenda items commencing with the urgent item of business, which he had agreed to add to the agenda regarding recycling options. This issue was said to be "time critical" and a decision was urgently needed in order to facilitate the business of the Authority. Following consideration of this item, Members agreed to then consider the Review of Parks and Open Spaces Strategy, the Anti Litter Presentation, the Environment Health Check and lastly, the Work Programme.

614 RECYCLING OPTIONS (REMOVING CARDBOARD FROM THE ORGANIC WASTE STREAM)

The Executive Member for Community Safety and Environment submitted a report setting out the costs and options for removing cardboard from the organic stream and how this might increase recycling performance in the future. The Head of Environmental Services sought Members' comments on the options now detailed, which would be presented to the Executive and to Council for approval.

The Head of Environmental Services explained that extensive changes to the recycling service were being proposed in order to achieve the necessary removal of cardboard from the organic waste stream. This Hertfordshire-wide issue had been considered by the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership which had asked all Hertfordshire District Councils to work on plans to remove cardboard. Five options to address this issue had been put forward, the detail of which was set out in the report now submitted, including the full cost implications of each option.

The Head of Environmental Services explained how each option would impact on the Council in terms of capital and revenue costs and that some of the options put forward

might also impact on the Council's reputation.

Members considered the options at length. It was noted that option 5 would entail considerable capital and revenue costs including the need to pay off the leases on the existing fleet of vehicles, the detail of which was set out in the report now submitted. This option however, provided a service enhancement for residents. From a resident's viewpoint, this option would involve the removal of one of their recycling boxes and their replacement with a new 240 litre wheeled bin. The remaining box would be used for paper and the new wheeled bin for all other dry recyclable materials, including some additional items which we are currently unable to collect. He reminded Members of the significant difference in income gained from clean paper compared to that for paper taken out of a co-mingled collection and thus the importance of keeping a separate container just for paper.

In response to a query from Councillor B Wrangles regarding the recycling boxes, the Head of Environmental Services explained recycling capacity requirements for the cardboard and the need to use wheeled bins under Option 5.

In response to a query from Councillor M Newman regarding those residents living in small cottages and terraced properties who had no space for bins, the Head of Environmental Services gave assurances that where necessary, individual solutions to recycling storage issues would be resolved wherever possible.

In response to a query from Councillor E Buckmaster regarding bins which might have a built in compartment for paper, the Head of Environmental Services referred to a system in use by Welwyn Hatfield Council whereby the bins had basket insert for paper. He undertook to investigate this if Members wished. He informed Members that there were a range of options for the provision of these, from providing them 'by default' to every household with the new wheeled bin; making them

available upon request free of charge or making them a chargeable option. The Waste Services Manager explained how this type of collection system would work.

Members considered other options for the storage and removal of waste including recycling and food waste. The Head of Environmental Services explained the rationale for the frequency of these collections. He explained that subsidised domestic home composters for garden waste were available to residents through Waste Aware.

In response to a query from Councillor P Gray regarding his concerns about recycling arrangements for people living in communal facilities such as flats, the Waste Services Manager explained that the majority of residents in flats already had recycling bins provided where ever space allowed.

The Committee supported a suggestion that options and costs for providing an internal basket for paper be investigated, similar to the arrangements used by Welwyn Hatfield Council and reported back to the Executive.

RESOLVED – that the Executive be advised that, the suggestion that options and costs for providing an internal basket for paper be investigated and reported to the Executive, be supported.

615 REVIEW OF PARKS AND OPEN SPACES STRATEGY

The Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support submitted a report on a new Draft Parks and Open Spaces Strategy for 2013-2018, the detail of which set out in the report now submitted and Essential Reference Paper “B”. The Environment Manager (Open Spaces) explained that a comprehensive review had been undertaken. The new draft strategy aimed to ensure that parks and open spaces were maintained as a valuable resource and were managed and developed in a responsible and effective way. Following approval by the Executive, it was noted that

residents and partner groups would be asked for feedback on three main areas:

- Does the strategy cover the key areas relating to open spaces that they feel are important?
- Is the strategy sufficiently inclusive?
- Are the objectives appropriate to meet the identified needs?

The Head of Environmental Services acknowledged that, in terms of feedback, many residents might prefer to use the internet, but that there would also be the option to send comments in writing following publications via Link magazine and other methods.

The Committee supported the Draft Parks and Open Spaces Strategy, as now submitted as ready for public consultation.

RESOLVED – that the Executive be advised that the Draft Parks and Open Spaces Strategy, as now submitted, be supported for public consultation.

616 UPDATE ON THE 2012 ANTI LITTER CAMPAIGN – PRESENTATION

The Environment Inspection Team Manager gave a presentation on progress made in relation to the 2012 Anti Litter Campaign. He outlined plans for the future in terms of how residents and businesses could get involved with future campaigns. He stated that litter was a growing problem in the District, with much of the litter being generated by fast food packaging and smoking. The Environment Inspection Team Manager commented that the Council aimed to secure the support of businesses, and encourage them to sign a pledge to keep the areas around their premises clean. It was noted the Council had statutory powers to require businesses, such as fast food establishments, to keep the area in front of their premises clean.

In response to a query from the Committee Chairman about the possibility of leaving extraneous packaging in a supermarket, as in Germany, the Head of Environmental Services explained that this would require the co-operation of supermarkets who, so far, were not too keen to co-operate.

In response to a query from the Chairman regarding a "return fee" for returning cans, the Head of Environmental Services explained that some supermarkets did offer a "Club Card Reward" for recycling cans but that the downturn in market prices had resulted in a decline in these schemes.

In response to a query from the Chairman regarding penalties for littering, the Environment Inspection Team Manager advised that the Council did not have litter wardens but Officers undertook occasional litter patrols as part of their wider duties. Officers had experienced difficulties in catching people actually dropping litter.

Councillor B Wrangles referred to a shop footpath in Hertford which was covered in cigarette butts and asked that Officers investigate this.

Councillor J Wyllie commented that recycling rubbish bins in Bishop's Stortford were not effective as they were not obvious enough in appearance to attract attention and he also suggested improvements to the road-side signage in regard to littering from vehicles. He asked that further thought be given to better signage on Council vehicles such as "Don't drop litter – £80 Fine!"

In response to a query from Councillor E Buckmaster regarding premises owners being brought before a Licensing Sub-Committee if they failed to keep their area around their premises clean, the Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services undertook to write to the Member once he had clarified the position. He explained that the real issue was engaging with

people to modify their behaviour, suggesting that there was also a need to work with schools on this issue.

In response to a query from the Chairman regarding bins in the side roads leading away from the high street food outlets, the Head of Environmental Services explained that bin usage had been reviewed but they could be costly to empty adding that sometimes, it was better to look at the frequency of street cleansing as this delivered better results in terms of overall cleanliness.

The Committee noted the progress made and received the presentation.

RESOLVED – that the presentation be received.

617 ENVIRONMENT HEALTH CHECK SEPTEMBER –
DECEMBER 2012

The Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services submitted a report on the performance of key indicators for the period September to December 2012. He explained that there were only two areas which were slightly below target, the detail of which was set out in the report now submitted.

The Committee received the report.

RESOLVED – that the reported performance for the period September to December 2012, be received.

618 ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE – WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman submitted a report setting out the Committee's future work programme for 2012/13, the detail of which had been set out in Essential Reference Paper "B" to the report now submitted.

The Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services referred to a workshop in April open

to all scrutiny Members, which would evaluate the work of the scrutiny committees in 2012/13 and would plan the work for the next civic year. He referred to the recent Peer Challenge which had taken place and, as a result of the comments received, Members might wish to be more proactive in deciding what topics to scrutinise in future.

The Committee approved the report.

RESOLVED – that the work programme be approved.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm

Chairman
Date