

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

PRESENT: Councillor D Abbott (Chairman)
Councillors W Ashley, R Beeching,
E Buckmaster, M Pope, C Rowley and
K Warnell

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors D Andrews, Mrs D Hollebon,
P Moore and P Ruffles

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

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| Lorraine Blackburn | - Democratic Services Officer |
| Cliff Cardoza | - Head of Environmental Services |
| Catherine Davis | - Waste Services Officer |
| Marian Langley | - Scrutiny Officer |
| George A Robertson | - Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services |
| Ian Sharratt | - Environmental Manager |
| David Thorogood | - Environmental Co-Ordinator |

56 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

It was moved by Councillor W Ashley and seconded by Councillor K Warnell, that Councillor J Wyllie be appointed

Vice Chairman of Environment Scrutiny Committee, for the Civic Year 2013/14.

RESOLVED – that Councillor J Wyllie be appointed Vice Chairman of Environment Scrutiny Committee, for the Civic Year 2013/14.

57 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Ballam, P Gray and B Wrangles. It was noted that Councillor R Beeching was substituting for Councillor P Ballam.

58 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

59 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed guests and new Members to the Committee and thanked Members for allowing him to continue as Chairman.

The Chairman referred to the Executive meeting on 4 June 2013, which asked that the three scrutiny committees review the relevance of their Performance Indicators to determine if any new measures needed to be introduced. The Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services also explained that the Executive felt that the work programme of each committee often previewed items to be submitted to the Executive rather than seeking opportunities to challenge and investigate matters which might be considered priorities for the Committees themselves. The Chairman commented that the Executive wished to encourage each scrutiny committee to set its own agenda on issues which would be beneficial to the District as a whole.

The Chairman asked Members to think about topics for

inclusion on the work programme as the meeting progressed, which could be added to the work programme later in the evening.

60 CONTRACT PERFORMANCE ENVIRONMENTAL OPERATIONS 2012/13

The Head of Environmental Services submitted an annual report on the performance of the Council's two main environmental operations contracts, for Waste Services (Refuse and Recycling, Street Cleansing) and Grounds Maintenance, the detail of which was set out in the report now submitted and Essential Reference Paper "B".

The Waste Services Officer provided updates on performance outturns in some key areas. She explained that the number of missed collections had decreased and that the percentage of household waste recycled had decreased slightly to 47.99% (against the Council's target of 50%). It was noted that residual waste collected from households had dropped by 10kg per household and this represented a significant improvement in terms of waste minimisation. Litter levels against the Council's performance indicator in 2012/13 had also decreased from 2.3% to 1.78%. There had also been a decrease in the number of "validated" complaints about litter received last year. The number of fly tipping incidents had also decreased by 27%. The Head of Environmental Services provided an update in relation to a number of "stop and search" events undertaken with partners to address the illegal transport of waste.

In response to a query from Councillor J Wyllie regarding commercial businesses and recycling, the Head of Environmental Services explained the issues associated with this and particularly the need to ensure that any commercial collection service "brakes even" from an accounting viewpoint. He advised that opportunities to provide commercial recycling would be kept under review and may become financially viable in the future. In response to a query from Councillor R Beeching concerning the collection of recycling from libraries,

the Head of Environmental Service explained that this would fall within the category of Hertfordshire County Council's commercial waste, and East Herts did not currently provide a commercial recycling collection service.

In response to a query concerning the damage done by some machines in relation to hedge pruning and how hedges were pruned, the Environment Manager – Parks and Open Spaces explained the rationale behind how hedges were trimmed and pruned along highways and rural roads. The Head of Environmental Services explained that hedges on highway verges were the responsibility of the County Council which the District Council cut under contract and to the County's specification. Any additional pruning would be at a cost to this Council. It was noted that many of these hedges were on private land and the tops were cut by the land owner or local farmers.

In response to a query from Councillor C Rowley regarding the reduction in household waste, the Waste Services Officer explained that as a result of the economic downturn, people were not buying as many newspapers and magazines. Councillor E Buckmaster added that the availability of digital information was also a contributing factor. In response to a further query from Councillor C Rowley regarding the Council's future focus in relation to supermarkets and extraneous packaging, the Head of Environmental Services explained that some producers had reduced their packaging with the support of Government organisations such as WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme). He advised that the Council had limited opportunities to influence packaging other than to lobby national organisations through the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership.

In response to a query from Councillor M Pope, concerning street cleansing, the Head of Environmental Services explained how the formula was applied.

In response to a query from Councillor J Wyllie regarding the cost and income implications of collecting commercial waste, the Head of Environmental Services explained the factors

which affected the viability of commercial waste recycling. He stated that it cost £95 a ton to send waste to landfill and if that continued to increase, then it could become viable for the Council to run separate collection services for recyclables. The possibility of operating a shared service with another Authority was considered.

Councillor D Andrews referred to the amount of litter signage at junctions and suggested that some of these should be relocated to just short of and after lay-bys. The Head of Environmental Services undertook to identify locations where this could be implemented in consultation with Hertfordshire Highways.

The Committee received and noted the report.

RESOLVED – that the performance of the Council's main environmental terms contracts be noted.

61 NEW RECYCLING SCHEME - REMOVING CARD FROM THE ORGANIC WASTE STREAM

The Executive Member for Community Safety and Environment submitted a report regarding the progress made in relation to the new recycling scheme to a dual stream system, the detail of which was set out in the report now submitted. The Head of Environmental Services anticipated that the start date for the new service (SPARC - Separate Paper and Recycling Collections) would be 11 November 2013. It was noted that vehicles designed to handle the new collections had been procured and new wheeled bins and the inner paper box inserts had been ordered.

The Head of Environmental Services stated that there would be extensive coverage explaining how the scheme would work including the use of the LINK magazine, road shows at public events in the five main towns, leaflets to every household etc, and that the onus would be on the individual household to request an inner paper box on an "opt in" basis so that it could delivered with their new wheeled bin.

In response to a query from Councillor K Warnell regarding redundant recycling boxes, the Head of Environmental Services explained that households would be encouraged to keep them and reuse them for other things such as storage boxes or as “spare” paper boxes. They could also take them to recycling centres.

In response to a query from Councillor R Beeching, regarding recycling bring banks, the Head of Environmental Services explained that these were still in operation but limited to collections of paper and textiles. He further explained that some recycling facilities at supermarkets were operated by the Council while others by the supermarkets themselves as part of their own commercial business model.

In response to a query from Councillor Mrs D Hollebon, the Head of Environmental Services confirmed that consideration would be given to how best to communicate the assistance available to disabled and elderly people for the new scheme.

Members received the report.

RESOLVED – that the update in progressing the new recycling scheme be noted.

62 EAST HERTS CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN - REVIEW OF PROGRESS

The Executive Member for Community Safety and the Environment submitted a report on the progress achieved during the first three years of implementing the East Herts Climate Change Action Plan, the detail of which was set out in the report now submitted and supporting Essential Reference Papers.

The Environmental and Strategy Development Manager explained that there had been a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions in relation to the waste contract via improved scheduling of rounds, more energy efficient vehicles and the

introduction of energy efficiency measures at Hertford Theatre. Savings had also been achieved at Wallfields, but occupancy had increased with the closure of The Causeway office. Energy usage had increased at Leisure Centres but this had to be viewed in the context of increasing membership levels and the expansion of the service to include larger gymnasiums.

In response to a query from Councillor K Warnell concerning a review of the action plan, the Environmental and Strategy Development Manager confirmed that a cost benefit analysis was undertaken before any project was progressed. The issue of energy savings through “powering down” computer equipment was discussed. Councillor K Warnell stated that energy could be saved via a two stage standby and recommended that IT should review this. The Head of Environmental Services suggested that he would pass these comments on to IT for further review.

The Committee received the report.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

63 ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY HEALTHCHECK AND PERFORMANCE OUTTURNS JANUARY TO APRIL 2013

The Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services submitted a report on the performance of key indicators for Environment Scrutiny Committee for the period January to April 2013, the detail of which was set out in the report now submitted and within the attached Essential Reference Papers.

Councillor J Wyllie referred to EHPI 157a (Process of planning applications: major applications) and queried the relevance of this as an indicator (and the “red” face shown), given that Planning Officers were trying to resolve legal agreement issues. The Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services suggested that Members might wish to reconsider some of Environment’s Performance Indicators

and descriptors, within the context of the review suggested earlier in the meeting as part of the committee's work programme.

The Committee received the report.

RESOLVED – that the reported performance for the period January to April 2013 be received.

64 2012/13 SERVICE PLAN MONITORING - END OF YEAR MONITORING

The Leader of the Council and Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services submitted a report summarising the Council's achievements against its priorities for 2012/13, the detail of which was set out in the report now submitted and within the attached Essential Reference Papers.

The Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services advised that the Executive had received a report containing all Service Plan summaries. A breakdown of which actions had been achieved, were on target, completed, suspended or deleted, was set out in the report now submitted. In summary, and from the viewpoint of the Environment Scrutiny, 63% of all actions had been achieved supporting the "Place" priority and the majority of actions with a revised completion date supporting the "Prosperity" priority. Four actions remained outstanding from 2011/12.

The Committee received the progress report.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

65 ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman submitted a report setting out the future work programme for Environment Scrutiny for 2013/14, the detail of which had been set out in Essential Reference Paper "B" of

the report now submitted.

Councillor R Beeching suggested that Members might wish to only review the Committee's "red" Performance Indicators (PI). The Chief Executive and Director of Customer Services suggested that the overall message might be unduly negative if the small number of red items were considered without the context of all the positive results that were being produced.

In response to a query from Councillor J Wyllie regarding the possibility of reviewing the PI for Fuel Poverty, the Head of Environment Services said that the Environmental and Strategy Development Manager was keen to move forward on this issue. Members supported the suggestion that Officers report back to their meeting in September 2013, setting out the potential scope for a Task and Finish review of how the Council might work with partners on the issue of and approach to, tackling Fuel Poverty.

In response to a query from Councillor K Warnell regarding grass verge and footway parking, the Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services explained the Council's role and that it was not a Police matter unless an obstruction occurred. Members supported a request that Officers report back on footway parking to a meeting later in the year.

Members agreed that Councillor J Wyllie would work with officers on the Performance Indicator working group and, in the absence of any other volunteers, the Chairman would join him.

The Committee approved the report, as amended.

RESOLVED – that the report, as amended, be approved.

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm

Chairman

Date