

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON TUESDAY
16 JUNE 2015, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs D Hollebon (Chairman)
Councillors G Cutting, J Goodeve, R Henson,
J Jones, A McNeece, D Oldridge, M Pope,
R Standley and K Warnell

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors A Alder, E Buckmaster,
J Cartwright, L Haysey, P Moore, P Ruffles,
C Woodward and I Richardson

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Democratic Services Officer
Karl Chui	- Performance Monitoring Officer
Simon Drinkwater	- Director of Neighbourhood Services
Louise Harris	- Housing Strategy and Development Manager
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
Will O'Neill	- Head of Communications, Engagement and Cultural Services
Claire Pullen	- Engagement and Partnerships Officer (Grants)
Ben Wood	- Head of Business Development

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Ian Richardson - CVSBEH

83 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

It was proposed by Councillor K Warnell and seconded by Councillor J Jones that Councillor G Cutting be appointed Vice-Chairman of Community Scrutiny Committee for the 2015/16 civic year.

After being put to the meeting, Councillor G Cutting was appointed Vice-Chairman of the Community Scrutiny Committee for the 2015/16 civic year.

RESOLVED – that Councillor G Cutting be appointed Vice-Chairman of Community Scrutiny Committee for the 2015/16 civic year.

84 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 20 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

85 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed newly elected Members to the Committee. She asked that those present introduce themselves and reminded Members to sign the attendance sheet.

The Chairman referred to a page 125 which had been omitted from the Agenda but which had been circulated separately by email. The Chairman reminded Members that those who were not a Member of Community Scrutiny Committee should first ask the Chairman's permission to speak.

86 COMMUNITY SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman submitted a report setting out the proposed

work programme for the 2015-16 civic year. The Scrutiny Officer explained that some of the work programme had been suggested by the previous administration. She sought feedback on any items Members might want to include for scrutiny. She reminded Members that with the creation of the new Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee, health related matters had been removed from the Community Scrutiny agenda.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that a Member Officer Group which had been meeting with the Registered Housing providers would report back to the November meeting.

It was noted that Community Scrutiny Committee was the designated committee to consider crime and disorder issues but that so far, no topic had yet been identified for scrutiny and that this would need to be considered towards the end of the year.

The Committee approved the report.

RESOLVED – that the work programme, as now detailed, be approved.

87 COMMUNITY VOLUNTARY SERVICE FOR BROXBOURNE AND EAST HERTS - ANNUAL REPORT

The Head of Communications, Engagement and Culture submitted a report providing the first annual overview of the work of the Community Voluntary Services for Broxbourne and East Herts (CVSBEH). He stated that the CVSBEH had provided a very good service to many voluntary organisations and had undertaken specialist projects on the Council's behalf.

Ian Richardson, Chief Officer for the CVSBEH explained that a lot had been achieved over the last 10 years and gave a presentation which provided an insight into the work of the organisation, its previous achievements and the day to day delivery of its core services and funding sources. He explained that the CVSBEH's Vice Chairman was Councillor A

Alder. Mr Richardson gave a summary of the voluntary organisations, (approximately 300) which worked with the CVSBEH and of the growing number of sports related groups.

In response to a query by Councillor D Oldridge regarding funding, Mr Richardson explained the various sources of funding and income for projects including how non-voluntary staff were paid.

In response to a query from Councillor R Standley regarding advice sessions, Mr Richardson explained that providing advice was a core service. A “drop in” advice service was also available once a week.

In response to a query from Councillor J Jones regarding the furniture scheme, Mr Richardson explained how the scheme, based on suitable donations worked, i.e. fire retardant labels needed to be attached to soft furnishings. He stated that sufficient space to house donated furniture was a constraint.

In response to a query from Councillor G Cutting regarding electrical equipment, Mr Richardson explained that all equipment, including washing machines were tested before being sold on to those in need.

In response to a query from Councillor M Pope regarding the Bishop’s Stortford Food Bank, Mr Richardson explained how the food bank was established and of the difficulties which needed to be overcome. He encouraged Members to speak with Officers should there be a need to set up other food banks in the District.

The Head of Communications, Engagement and Culture referred Members to Essential Reference Paper “B” (Service Level Agreement) of the report submitted and the fact that the organisation would invite the Council to nominate an Officer and a Member to sit on its management board.

Mr Richardson explained that Councillor A Alder already held the role of Trustee and Director of the CVSBEH. The Leader of the Council referred to possible conflicts of interest should

Councillor A Alder remain in that role. The Leader suggested that any Member expressing an interest to sit on the Management Board should contact the Chairman of Community Scrutiny Committee and the Leader of the Council.

The Committee received the report and recommended to the Executive that the Service Level Agreement as detailed in Essential Reference Paper “B” of the report submitted be approved.

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

(B) the Service Level Agreement be supported; and

(C) Members’ expression of interest in taking up the role of Board Member to the CVSBEH be forwarded to the Chairman of Community Scrutiny Committee and the Leader of the Council.

88 ANNUAL REPORT ON DISCRETIONARY COMMUNITY GRANTS

The Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing submitted a report which provided an update of grants allocated between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2015.

The Engagement and Partnerships Officer (Grants) provided a summary of the report as now submitted.

In response to a query from Councillor M Pope regarding applications from church based organisations for community activity grants, the Engagement and Partnerships Officer (Grants) stated that faith groups could apply for grants as long as the grant was for a community based activity and not for worship.

In response to a query from Councillor J Goodeve regarding consultation on the proposed changes, the Engagement and Partnerships Officer (Grants) provided a detailed account of

the consultation process currently being undertaken through focus groups of interested parties.

In response to a query from Councillor D Oldridge regarding proposed limitations on the Community Activities Pot, the Engagement and Partnerships Officer (Grants) explained that smaller organisations did not have the ability to generate income whereas Parish and Town Councils did. She explained that many applications for grants were made towards the end of the year.

Councillor J Jones stated that many small organisations did not apply for grants because of the paper work involved, i.e. the need to have a constitution in place. He suggested that Members should provide help to these groups. The Engagement and Partnerships Officer (Grants) explained how “mini-grants” worked particularly in relation to those organisations without constitutions. Councillor R Standley stated that she had been able to source a template for a constitution from the CVSBEH.

The Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing emphasised the importance of networking to help groups and to be proactive in making groups aware.

Councillor K Warnell referred to “casual” grants which Members formerly had discretionary use of. The Engagement and Partnerships Officer (Grants) encouraged Members to attend the Focus Group meeting in June for further information on how Members could help the grant allocation process.

Councillor C Woodward welcomed the relaxation of the process. He queried whether priority was being given to rural areas because Town Councils were benefitting from the new Homes Bonus (NHB). The Engagement and Partnerships Officer (Grants) explained that priority was given to capital grants but that in relation to all other grants, there was no priority for rural groups.

The Leader referred to health and wellbeing in terms of the

importance of the “public health district offer” of £10,000 and how this would positively impact on the grant making process.

The Committee received the report and supported the changes as now proposed.

RESOLVED – that (A) the allocation of grants in accordance with agreed policy be supported agreed and the future inclusion of the “district offer” in the grant making process be noted;

(B) the process for Community Activities and Small Community Capital grants be relaxed by the exclusion of the need to involve Town or Parish Councils in the process;

(C) the Community Activities pot be extended to village halls and Parish Councils and used to support special events only; and

(D) the time period for claiming small capital grants be reduced from a year to six months.

89 UPDATING THE SHARED OWNERSHIP LOCAL PRIORITIES CASCADE

The Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing submitted a report on proposed amendments to the Council’s Shared Ownership Local Priorities Cascade process. The Housing Strategy and Development Manager provided a summary of the process and the revisions proposed and how this would bring the process in line with the priority cascade within the Choice Based Lettings rental scheme.

Councillor K Warnell expressed concern about the lack of shared ownership properties on the market. The Housing Strategy and Development Manager explained how the proportionality worked and described what other shared ownership schemes and options were available to those who could not access the property market in the normal way.

The Committee received the report and recommended to the Executive that the minor changes highlighted in this report be supported.

RESOLVED - that (A) the changes to the Shared Ownership Local Priorities Cascade be noted; and

(B) the Executive be requested to approve the minor changes in (A) above.

90 2014/15, 2013/14 AND 2012/13 END OF YEAR SERVICE PLAN MONITORING REPORT

The Director of Finance and Support Services submitted a report which explained how the Council had performed in 2014/15 against the actions and objectives it set out to achieve and reported on the status of all outstanding actions from 2013/14 and 2012/13.

The Head of Business Development explained that this was a retrospective look at the actions agreed by the previous administration and that Members might wish to agree a new set of priorities. The Head of Business Development stated that, in the main, the message was positive with most of the actions having been delivered. The report, as now submitted, provided an explanation for those which had been suspended or deleted.

Councillor R Henson referred to the Fuel Poverty objective and commented that the percentage was very high. He queried what could be done to bring this down. The Scrutiny Officer explained that many of the properties in East Herts were difficult to insulate because of their construction or age. She undertook to provide the Member with a link to a report which had been considered by Environment Scrutiny Committee on this matter.

Councillor K Warnell referred to the 3G all-weather football pitches implemented at Hartham Common and queried whether there were any plans to do the same at Grange Paddocks, Bishop's Stortford. The Head of Communications,

Engagement and Culture explained that the Council was actively looking for solutions and ways to make use of £3M of section 106 monies for sports facilities.

In response to a query by Councillor M Pope and the recent Housing Survey Consultation, the Acting Chief Executive advised that a report would be presented to the Executive in August 2015. In response to a further query from Councillor Pope about property funding investment, the Acting Chief Executive confirmed that the Council was on track.

The Head of Communications, Engagement and Culture confirmed that the “Get East Herts Working” would be reported to the East Herts Partnership Group in July 2015.

The Committee received the report.

RESOLVED – that progress against the Council’s priorities, including revised completion dates, suspensions and deletions against 2014/15 Service Plan actions and 2013/14 and 2012/13 Service Plan actions be received.

91 COMMUNITY SCRUTINY HEALTHCHECK REPORT
FEBRUARY TO MARCH 2015

The Director of Finance and Support Services submitted a report on the performance of key indicators for Community Scrutiny Committee for the period February to March 2015. The Head of Business Development referred to missing data which had been emailed to Members and had been tabled at the meeting. He explained that the report looked retrospectively at the performance of 11 performance indicators covering the period of the previous administration and stated that new Members might want to set new objectives and priorities.

In response to a query from Councillor D Oldridge regarding the timescale of the trends, the Performance Monitoring Officer provided an update.

In response to a query from Councillor K Warnell regarding the establishment of targets, the Acting Chief Executive explained that these were considered by the joint meeting of Scrutiny Committees and then approved by the Executive. He stated that it was the intention of corporate management team to review how the Council used performance indicators with a view to establishing whether they were productive and whether more useful trends could be identified. He referred to homelessness which was not measured as a key indicator but that statistics on this issue could provide invaluable information to both Officers and Members.

The Committee received the report.

RESOLVED – that the reported performance for the period February to March 2015 be received.

The meeting closed at 8.55 pm

Chairman
Date