



OVERVIEW and SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2011/12

June 2012

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2011/12

Contents

	Page
What is Scrutiny?	1
Scrutiny at East Herts	2
Overview and Scrutiny May 2011 - April 2012	
• General business of all committees	4
• Corporate Business Scrutiny	6
➤ Including Joint Scrutiny sessions	
• Community Scrutiny	9
• Health Engagement Panel	14
• Environment Scrutiny	17
External Joint Scrutiny and working with County	20
Evaluating Overview And Scrutiny	22
Plans for 2012/13	25
Evolving Role of Scrutiny	28
Training	30
... and finally	31



Councillor David Andrews

Chairman Corporate Business Scrutiny



Councillor Graham McAndrew

Chairman Community Scrutiny



Councillor Diane Hollebon

Chairman Environment Scrutiny

A total of 36 councillors have served on the scrutiny committees, Health Engagement Panel or task and finish groups this year.

This report records their key achievements (it does not attempt to list every discussion or decision) and sets out our hopes and plans for the coming year.

“I would just like to recognise the vital role played by scrutiny and the scrutiny committees through the year.

They have, I believe, developed a maturity during the past year that has led them to be more incisive in their role as scrutineers and critical friend in helping to inform policy.

I offer my thanks to the committee chairmen and members of those committees. With their help we will explore the opportunities within the Localism Act in the coming year and work with those in our communities to help them play a part in shaping their own towns and villages.”



Councillor Tony Jackson – Leader, East Herts Council

From Annual Council Meeting 16 May 2012

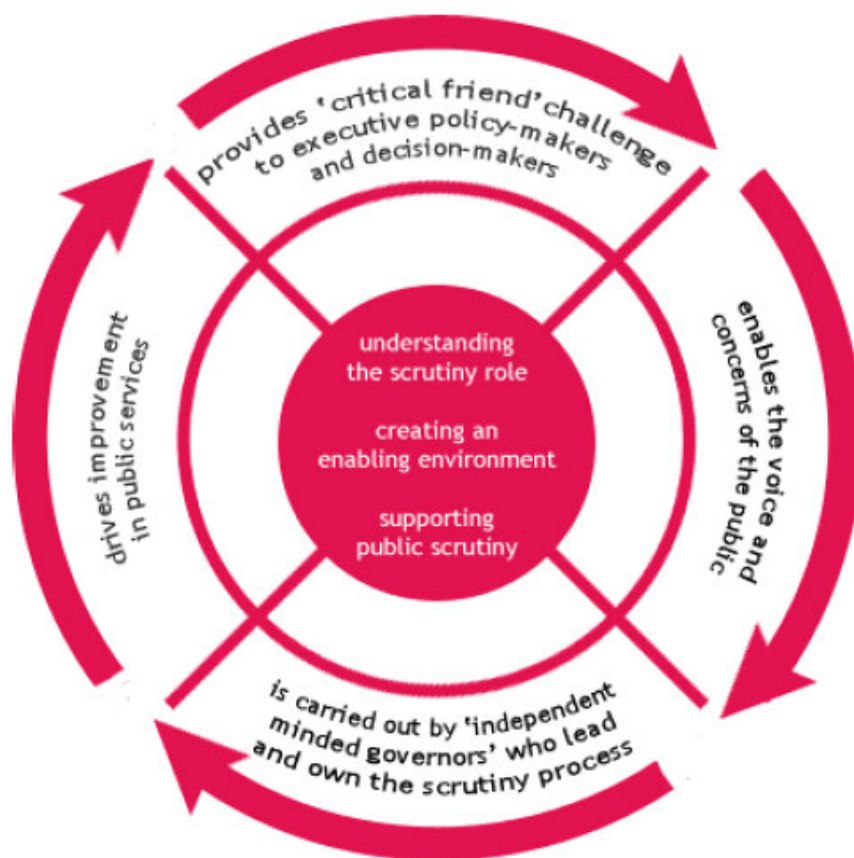
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1. WHAT IS SCRUTINY?

The aim of scrutiny is to provide an open and transparent forum in which elected councillors, sitting in public, can review the work of the council to check that policies and services are meeting the priorities and the needs of local people. Scrutiny committees cannot make decisions themselves, but they have the power of influence. They make recommendations informed by partner and public opinions, performance information, examples of best practice, expert advice and evidence.

The Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) has set out the 'four principles of good scrutiny' which should apply in the scrutiny cycle – and which have been adopted by East Herts:



In addition, local government scrutiny has statutory powers to scrutinise the work and performance of partnerships and partners, in relation to Crime and Disorder and the work of the Local Strategic Partnership.

There is also a separate power to scrutinise Health, and East Herts contributes to this function which is led by Hertfordshire County Council. There are a lot of changes on the way arising out of the new Health and Social Care Act – but these are for the future and did not impact on the 2011/12 scrutiny agenda.

2. SCRUTINY AT EAST HERTS.

East Herts has three ‘topic specific’ scrutiny committees given below.

Corporate Business Scrutiny (CBS): Scheduled to meet 6 times per year and Joint Scrutiny: which meets 2 times a year	Regular performance monitoring
	Pre-decision scrutiny (selecting from the Forward Plan)
	Budget setting proposals and strategies
	Scrutiny and policy development of the ‘business’ side of the council including: finance, ICT, facilities, legal & procurement
Community Scrutiny: Scheduled to meet 4 times per year	Community Safety and Protection
	Community Development, Leisure & Culture
	Health and Housing
Environment Scrutiny: Scheduled to meet 4 times per year	Planning Policy and Transport
	Environment and Environmental Quality
	Conservation and Climate Change

During the year, two **Joint Scrutiny** sessions have been held to allow members from all the committees to come together to discuss significant budgetary and cross-cutting issues. It is cost effective and more time efficient to hold a single meeting rather than three separate ones.

The initial service plan and budget consultation with councillors (prior to the Joint meeting) was offered as an on-line forum available throughout December 2011 and up to the first Joint meeting in January 2012. This gave councillors an extended period of time to read and consider each option and to raise questions on the proposals – these could then be taken into account before the final draft budget and service plans were brought forward to committee.

East Herts Council has a seat on the county-wide Hertfordshire Health Scrutiny Panel. Our representative is the councillor who is Chairman of our own **Health Engagement Panel (HEP)** which operates as a ‘standing panel’ under the Community Scrutiny Committee.

During 2011/12, the Committees were supported by one full-time officer. The Scrutiny Officer role is to provide project management support to the Scrutiny Committees and undertake research and information analysis in relation to reviews set up by the main Committees. Another important strand of the officer’s role is to ensure external witnesses, experts, partners and local residents are invited to be involved in the scrutiny activity within East Herts.

3. How do the Committees decide what to scrutinise?

Councillors select issues which are:

- Of local public concern
- Linked to the council's vision and priorities
- Capable of being influenced
- Not being scrutinised by another body

In the light of the economic climate, 2011/12 saw councillors add three new considerations to topic planning. They decided to also consider:

- areas where significant costs might be incurred or could be saved
- minimising the level of risk associated with the topic/issue
- the length of time since the topic was last reviewed.

4. How to get involved

Scrutiny is strengthened by involving partners and residents. They bring expertise, local knowledge, fresh ideas and external challenge.

If you would like to know more, ring the Scrutiny Officer on 01992 531612 or e-mail scrutiny@eastherts.gov.uk

You can access full details on any item or outcome mentioned in the following pages of this report via our website. Agendas, reports and minutes of every council committee are posted and regularly updated – and meetings are open to the public:

<http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/committees>

If you ever take part in one of our scrutiny reviews and every time you attend as an observer, we would value your feedback to help us improve the process. An on-line feedback form is available at

<http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/scrutinyfeedback>

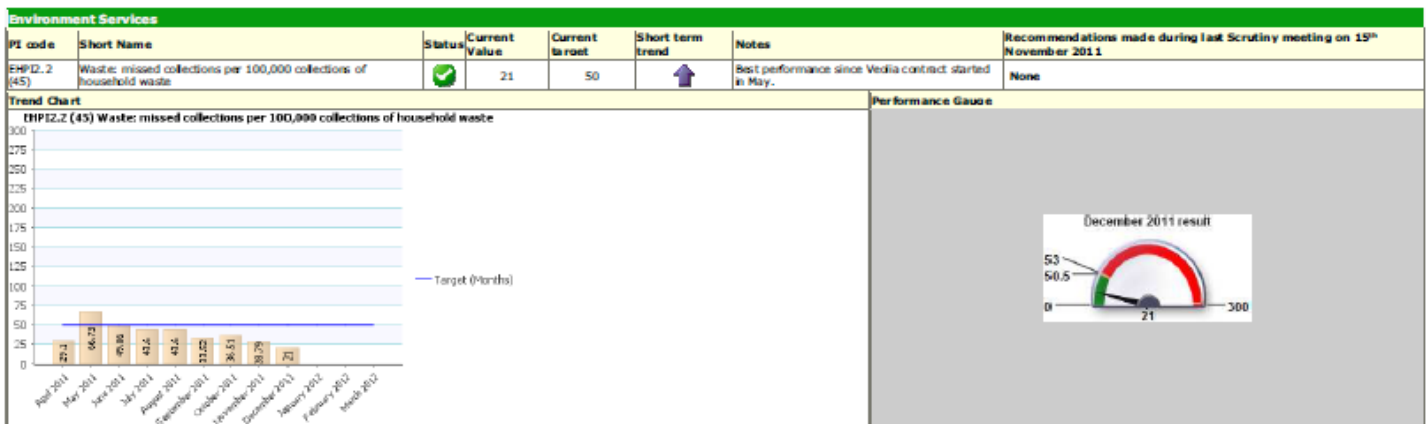
or you can ask for a paper-based version from the Scrutiny Officer.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ACHIEVEMENTS May 2011 – April 2012

5. General business of all Committees

Performance monitoring:

- At any time this is an important role for scrutiny – but when funding is tight, it is important we make every penny count and make a measurable difference to residents. At every scrutiny meeting (alternate meetings for CBS), councillors receive a report showing how well the services are performing against target levels. Since 2010 far fewer of these targets are now set centrally – the majority are set by local agreement so we can focus on the issues which really matter to local people in East Hertfordshire. The report is known as a ‘Healthcheck’ for good reasons – it is one way of taking the temperature of the council and checking it is operating well. For CBS this report also includes financial information so that scrutiny gets an holistic view across the council’s business functions.
- One example from Environment Scrutiny is reproduced below. It relates to the collection of household waste and shows the number of ‘missed bins’ for every 100,000 houses visited.



Councillors are able to follow the monthly performance trend in the columns on the left hand side and use the dial on the right hand side as a quick reference ‘traffic light’ system to pick up on good/amber warning/red results.

As our new contractor took over in May 2011 the figure jumped up over target. Although concerned, councillors were aware that there had been changes to the collection routes and collection days. The contractor had to get used to the new routes and, despite extensive publicity it was inevitable that some residents would forget to put bins out on the new day. As the trend chart shows – both parties have settled down into the new routine and we now have a ‘missed bin’ rate well below our target figure.

Service Plan Monitoring:

- At the start of every year each council service sets out its main projects for the forthcoming 12 months. As part of the budget setting process councillors agree (or not) to fund these and every project has a completion date set against it. Halfway through the year the scrutiny committees get a report on the progress of each of the projects that fall under their remit – with another report coming to them at year end.

One mid year report which came to CBS in November 2011 began by stating

*In total, there are 53 actions in the 2011/12 Service Plans relevant to Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee, of which:
28% (15) have already been achieved
55% (29) are on target
17% (9) have had their completion dates revised.*

A good start – but scrutiny is interested in the 9 projects which are not on target as these might lead to problems further down the line. Each hold up is explained and councillors check to see whether they are satisfied enough is being done to remedy the situation. Sometimes it is another agency outside the council who might be taking longer than expected to act or make a decision – but if it is internal, then we have to find a solution and learn from the situation.

Call-In:

- Whenever a key decision is made by the Executive it is publicised and open to scrutiny for five working days before the decision takes effect. During that time, if four or more councillors object to the decision, it can be ‘called-in’ and heard by the most appropriate scrutiny committee.

During 2011/12 there were no ‘call-ins’ at East Herts.

Councillor Call for Action (CCfA):

- Under section 119 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, councillors may call for debate and discussion at committee, on a topic of neighbourhood concern. These powers are limited to an issue which affects a single council ward and can only be brought when all other attempts at resolution have been exhausted.

Since the introduction of CCfA, councillors at East Herts have never had cause to bring forward such a case.

6. Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee (CBS)

Councillors

D Andrews (Chairman)	P Phillips (Vice Chairman)
E Bedford	M Pope
G Jones	J Ranger
W Mortimer	G Williamson
T Page	J Wing

Substitutes:

Cllrs S Bull, K Crofton, J Mayes and M Wood

Scrutiny:

- Along with the council's Audit Committee, CBS holds the reins on the 'business functions' of the council. During this year, councillors have subjected the following reports to scrutiny:
 - Annual Governance Statement
 - Partnership Register – Governance and risk management when working with other agencies

Scrutiny and Audit serve to check that statutory requirements, regulations and legal aspects of governance are complied with – offering East Herts residents a measure of security and confidence in the process.

- At the first meeting of the year, councillors got a sense of the scale of Freedom of Information requests coming into the council. The number grew by 42% in 2010 compared with 2009 and there was a further 52% increase in the first quarter of 2011 compared to the same period in 2010. The topics covered ranged from Allotments to Zoo Licensing and, as an illustration, officers reported that of the 220 requests in 2011 to date – 134 were from individuals, 39 from businesses, 27 from the media, 19 from various organisations and one from an MP.

Some requests are clear and easy to deal with as the data is readily available (eg: how many staff work for the council?) – but others are resource intensive as they require research by council staff to collect, collate and verify information as it might not be held in a format which matches the question raised (eg: How many social housing tenant enquiries in 2009 and 2010 and 2011, separately, mentioned any of the following words: ghost, ghosts, haunted, spirit, haunting or poltergeist?). For the interested reader – the answer to this question is "None"!

Every Freedom of Information question asked of East Herts, along with the reply, is posted on line on the council's website and can be found at <http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/index.jsp?articleid=12831>


The council might never know why the question is being asked, but in most cases it has to invest resources into providing a reply. There are some safeguards to protect us from unreasonable or vexatious requests – but the Information Commissioner's Office can still over-rule the council should they interpret the evidence differently. This unquantifiable cost to the council was of real concern to scrutiny at this time of economic restraint and councillors asked for data on the 'time and cost per request' be kept over the coming year so it can be reviewed in 2012/13.

- Scrutiny, and the whole of council, is interested in the views and opinions of the public. Two reports were received by CBS which gave councillors an opportunity to check that the council was responding promptly and appropriately to local opinion:
 - Progress against the 'all survey' action plan (based on the public's responses to both the 2009 Residents' Survey and the 2008 Place Survey)
 - Review of comments, compliments and complaints 2010/11

Some situations are out of our control (heavy snow fall making it unsafe for the refuse collection vehicles to go out) and some are the responsibility of other agencies (potholes in the road) – but if there is a problem we can deal with then we want to find a solution and put procedures in place to prevent repeats.

In 2011/12 a small number of formal complaints (10) did get referred to the Local Government Ombudsman by the complainant and no cases of maladministration were identified during that time. However scrutiny was concerned over the length of time taken to deal with some complaints at the earlier Stage 2 level and, although there is always room for improvement, many of these delays could be explained by the council having to wait for data/information from an external agency (such as the Department of Works and Pensions).

- CBS always gets the opportunity to comb through the Corporate Annual Report (for the previous year), the Corporate Strategic Plan (projected forward for 4 years) and the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Plan (how are we going to pay for everything). These important documents then go on to the Executive and then full Council which allows them to be well aired and debated. Residents and the press can attend all these meetings and our Executive and Council are also webcast live on the evening. Access to the live service is through

the button on the front page of our website  and from there you can get to the archive of previous recordings.

The reports and plans themselves are also readily available on the website at <http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/index.jsp?articleid=11547> .

- In a similar vein, the detailed debates, recommendations and decision making around the formal budget setting process are also held in an open and transparent forum with all the paperwork for the councillors' meeting also being available to residents and interested parties. Scrutiny of the service plans, the draft budget and the targets we are setting ourselves for the coming year are all presented to two **Joint Scrutiny** meetings in January and February each year when the members of all three committees come together. We used to meet separately but it was costly and time consuming so we streamlined the process and tried to make it more cost effective. It is a heavy workload for councillors but one which they take very seriously.
- One long and detailed scrutiny debate arose out of a review of the Discretionary Rate Relief which we offer. This 'relief' applies to charities and rural businesses where the council has some limited discretion to reduce the business rates paid by these categories of tax payers. The cost of offering this relief to this group (just over 200 organisations) is £97K with the funding coming partly from the council and partly from government. In the current economic climate, every area of expenditure has to be reviewed – and this budget was no exception.

In order to identify £30K of savings, scrutiny sent a recommendation on changes to Rate Relief for rural pubs, rural petrol stations, sports clubs, village halls and national charities to the Executive for their consideration. The Executive accepted most points but decided to look again at village halls and also exempted the local Citizens' Advice Service (CAB) from any reduction in relief.

Comment from Cllr David Andrews (Chairman):

I would like to thank members of CBS for the time and effort they have given to scrutiny during 2011/12. Many reports they have to deal with are technical and full of detailed financial data – after all, the business of a district council which oversees the wellbeing of some 128,000 people is always going to be a complex matter.

We keep looking for ways to make the information more 'digestible' and I think we have succeeded with the visual format of the Performance Healthcheck – but we still have a way to go with summarising and presenting financial material. With the help of feedback from councillors – and ideas from the public – I would like to see the work of CBS become even more transparent and accessible to a wider audience.

7. Community Scrutiny

Councillors

G McAndrew (Chairman)	J Mayes
E Buckmaster	P Moore
S Bull (Vice Chairman)	P Ruffles
T Herbert	N Symonds
D Hone	C Woodward

Substitutes:

Cllr N Poulton

Scrutiny:

- At the start of the civic year councillors got to see the details relating to the December 2010 -April 2011 period for the newly reopened Hertford Theatre on the old Castle Hall site. The project was designed as an 'invest-to-save' scheme with the expectation that over time the council would increase income, maximise use of this asset and make a significant and positive contribution to the cultural offer in the district.

In addition to improved overall financial performance – the visual appearance of the building has been greatly enhanced, the venue is much more accessible for customers with a disability and councillors heard that the income for room hire was running well ahead of target. The introduction of a digital cinema has also been appreciated by the public and it opened to sell-out showings.

Projects on this scale do have teething problems and the report set out the key challenges which still needed to be addressed. Although acknowledging that it was 'early days' and quick judgements should not be made – councillors did pick up on the lower than projected customer figures for the main auditorium and the delay in installing the micro-hydro unit (planned for the weir site beside the building) which will be an attraction in its own right but also reduce utility costs for the theatre. Both of these points and a full year of financial and audience data will be the focus of a detailed report coming back to the scrutiny committee in June 2012.

- Community Scrutiny was part of the process which reviewed a report on the Assessment of East Herts sports facilities which had been undertaken as part of Sport England 'Facilities Improvement Scheme'. Scrutiny was pleased to learn that our robust approach to analysis and consultation was seen as an exemplar by Sport England who would be using the resulting strategy as a model of good practice.

- East Herts is one member of the local Community Safety Partnership and detailed information on that area of work can be found on our website at <http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/index.jsp?articleid=10435>

The report which came to scrutiny during the year was reviewing progress against the 3 year action plan and the key issue which stood out for councillors was the very low response rate from the public when the Partnership put out a consultation to gather residents' views on crime and community safety issues. This might suggest our residents feel very safe and secure in the district and have no concerns to put forward – but councillors made a number of low and nil cost suggestions related to raising the profile of the next consultation and getting better publicity with the objective of increasing the response rate.

- As part of their monitoring of the Homeless and Homeless Prevention strategy action plan, councillors got to hear how recent changes in legislation could impact on local people. On the horizon are social landlords offering fixed term tenancies (rather than lifetime ones), tenancies being offered at 80% market rate and the incoming reduction in housing allowances.

At particular risk are tenants under the age of 35 who are currently in one-bedroom accommodation and who would have their allowance reduced to a single room rate. Scrutiny is keen for the situation to be closely monitored, particularly in relation to younger people.

- The main East Herts Housing Strategy has run its full five year course (2008 -2011) and needs renewing. Scrutiny was able to consider and agree on a set of key future objectives which can now go out for wider consultation with our partners and residents.

Councillors had already supported the main themes for the future (the strategic housing objectives) and all the consultation will be around ways to deliver these

- Maximise the delivery of a range of new homes, including affordable homes whilst ensuring the best use of existing housing
 - Meet the needs of a growing elderly population
 - Meet the needs of vulnerable people and stronger communities.
- It's always good to end the year on a high note – and that's just what our leisure contractor SLM - Everyone Active was able to do. After the 2009 investment of £3.58 million made by East Herts into the local leisure facilities it is excellent news to hear that our residents are

'voting with their feet' as membership numbers and usage figures continue to stay strong. Scrutiny congratulated SLM on their 2011 performance and for helping to make this 'invest-to-save' project such a success.

SLM continues to invest in our venues across the district with £119,000 being spent at Hartham (Hertford) and a further £40,000 due at Grange Paddocks (Bishop's Stortford).



During the year, the council installed £84,000 of Technogym gym equipment at Fanshawe Pool and Gym in Ware. In return, SLM - Everyone Active has agreed to reduce the management fee, saving the council £154,700 over the contract's seven remaining years. Some of the new equipment at Fanshawe is specifically designed for wheelchair users and people with disabilities, putting the leisure centre among the best in the region for people on exercise referral schemes from their GP.

Not to be left out, Leventhorpe Pool and Gym in Sawbridgeworth will receive £29,000 of new equipment in autumn 2012.

Reviews:

- Scrutiny commissioned a short-term member/officer working group to look at community grants and make recommendations to get them 'fit for purpose' for 2012/13. The group reviewed the way grants had been split up into a range of different 'pots' and judged the current system to be over complicated and confusing. They suggested rebranding the funding streams, simplifying the application process and clarifying the allocation procedure.

The group also looked at prioritising a Jubilee theme and an Olympic theme for 2012. All their recommendations were accepted by the committee and by the Executive - and 67 grants have already been allocated. Further details can be obtained from the website at <http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/index.jsp?articleid=25480>

- 2011/12 saw a task and finish group (which is what we call our review groups) of six councillors, chaired by Cllr Andrews, look at two key aspects of Community Safety in more detail. The first part of the review examined the challenges facing community safety funding and the second part addressed the issue of the public perception of crime as it relates to the actual level of crime reported in the area.

Members on the group represented a good cross-party section of the council, including our youngest member (Cllr Charlie Rowley) who brought a fresh perspective to the discussions.

Community Safety has had to contribute to the government's deficit reduction and funding has fallen from £120,000 in 2010 to just £55,218 in the current year, so it is easy to see why some difficult decisions have to be made. With all projects having merit and contributing to community safety, this was a challenging task. As the extent of even more future cuts was not known, the group come up with a report which in their view offered the 'least worse' option for withdrawing funding from specific projects. They set out the recommendation in a ranking order for making cuts, listing which should 'go' first - through to the one which should have its funding 'protected' as far as possible.

For details of the recommended rank order and arguments which supported the difficult decision, see the full committee report and subsequent notes (minute 440) from the November 2011 meeting <http://online.eastherts.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=116&MIId=1742&Ver=4>

The group moved straight on to look at the question: "Despite East Herts having low crime levels and ranking so highly in independent 'quality of life' surveys, why do residents appear more fearful of crime than the actual incidents of crime suggest?" Supported by academic research, the group quickly appreciated that this was an intractable question in itself and focused on looking for ways of working with our partners to counter the perception.

The resulting report was based on a wealth of consultation including attendees at the Rural Parish Conference, a questionnaire carried out by councillors in their own wards, a Conversation Café held in Hertford Theatre, presentations to town councils and consideration of responses to relevant questions in the 2011 East Herts Residents'

Survey. The group also had a face to face meeting with the new police Chief Inspector for the district.

The resulting three recommendations and suggested action plan can be found in detail under the February 2012 meeting (minute 641) on <http://online.eastherts.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=116&MIId=1722&Ver=4>

Both reports were offered to, and taken up by the full Community Safety Partnership.

Trying something new:

- At one meeting of this committee the issue of an ageing population generally and the demographic data for East Herts particularly were raised as a concern. Estimates suggest that in 2015, 17.5% of the East Herts population will be 65+ years old – that will be 24,600 residents. Councillors agreed to initiate a discussion on the topic with the Executive member for health, housing and community support – with a view to exploring the council’s readiness, resilience and sustainability in respect of the “ageing well” and “later life” agenda.

This approach to scrutiny – one of questioning the Executive’s forward thinking on a themed topic – was new for East Herts. Councillors raised issues relating to strategy, budgets, involvement of older people, the concept of ‘lifetime neighbourhoods’ and problems of social isolation and poor rural transport links.

There were three key outcomes from the discussion:


- The formation of a member group to look at the role of the ward councillor in relation to “ageing well”
- For all senior officers to look at “age proofing” their services and estimate any cost involved/resources needed
- An undertaking to strengthen the focus with our partners on addressing the growing number and needs of this sizable section of our community

Comment from Cllr Graham McAndrew (Chairman):

It’s been a very productive year for Community Scrutiny - trialling new questioning techniques throughout the year and putting our extensive training to the test. All members of the committee played an important role in ensuring that our very full programme was scrutinised carefully during the course of the past year.

I feel the committee has made a real contribution to ‘launching’ the Ageing Well initiative which will bring wide-ranging, long-term benefits to East Herts residents. On a more immediate timescale, we hope our communities enjoy their local Jubilee and Olympic themed events which we have been able to support through our community grant programme – the only thing scrutiny can’t do is guarantee the sunshine!!

8. Health Engagement Panel

Chairman: Councillor Dorothy Hone	
Councillors	
R Beeching (Vice Chairman)	K Crofton
E Buckmaster	N Symonds
S Bull	

Substitutes:
Cllrs P Ballam and P Moore

Partners and outward focus:

- This Panel has an excellent record for dialogue with local health and well-being providers and 2011/12 was no exception. Councillors welcomed visitors to every one of their meetings during the past year and the opportunity for scrutiny of the service, generating ideas for co-operative working and problem-solving grew out of the discussions.

month	speaker and agency	Key issues for East Herts
June 2011	Darren Leach: Executive Director Delivery at Princess Alexander Hospital, Harlow	31% of PAH patients come from East Herts – poor rural transport links. Also limited signage to the hospital from routes on Hertfordshire side of the county boundary. Councillors raised the issue of the use within PAH of the ‘purple folder’ communication tool for patients who have learning difficulties.
Oct 2011	Sarah Brierley: Director of Business Development and Partnerships, East and North Herts NHS Trust	How to work together to best communicate the forthcoming changes to adult and children’s emergency department care at the QEII and Lister hospitals. Four councillors went on to take part in the Trust’s focus groups on the matter and information on the changes was included in the council’s Spring 2012 edition of LINK magazine

Oct 2011	Managers from two of the Children's Centres within the East Herts District	An opportunity to hear about the full range of work undertaken by the Centres, but a focus on the 'Funky Food' healthy eating project run jointly by the centre in Hertford and East Herts Council. Explore ideas and opportunities for further joint work.
Dec 2011	Siobham Nundram: Community Services Manager, Hertfordshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust	An opportunity to hear about the transformation of mental health services and support – particularly looking at what is now different and new for patients in East Herts and their families.
Feb 2012	Anne Griffiths: Programme Lead for Choose and Book NHS Hertfordshire PCT	An opportunity for councillors to better understand the 'Choose and Book' system of GP referrals to specialists and for the council to ask for data on level of GP/patient take-up at surgeries in this district.

Internal scrutiny:

- As a district council, we have a significant part to play in the general well-being of local residents. The Health Engagement Panel contributed extensively to the development of the East Herts Public Health strategy 2008-2013. <http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/index.jsp?articleid=9326> will take you to this document and the Panel continues to check on whether the planned projects are delivering positive results. Their work this year has included
 - Performance monitoring of progress against 2011/12 action plan
 - Review of strategy and proposals for 2012/13
 - Agreement on 2012/13 action plan.

With limited resources, it is important to identify the most productive and effective ways to work. The approach taken by the Health Engagement Panel has been to be very clear about what each project was setting out to achieve, evaluating whether it has been successful and then how it might be improved or developed further if we are going to repeat it in the following year.

Working together (with feedback from our local partners) HEP members and officers have developed an interactive, workshop approach to joint planning for the year ahead.

- We have been subject to ‘scrutiny’ ourselves during the year as part of the judging process for a national award – where we were successful in being given the **Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) 2011 Health Promotion and Community Well-being Organisation and Partnership Award.**

East Herts Council achieved the highest level of award classification, related in particular to the range of Public Health activities completed since the launch of the East Herts Public Health Strategy 2008-2013. The award is for three years and means that the council will be able to work with the RSPH to further develop and improve its Public Health effectiveness and targeted work in reducing health inequalities for local East Herts residents.

The feedback from the assessment panel at the Panel Challenge event on the 28 September 2011 highlighted a number of key strengths of the work of East Herts Council:

- Strong and effective partnership working
- Good involvement and engagement with elected councillors
- Clear strategic support and individual leadership of the Public Health role

External Scrutiny:

- Formal scrutiny of the Health Service lies with Hertfordshire County Council and all 10 district/borough councils make contribution to that body. The timing of our Health Engagement Panel meetings are set to fall just before these HCC meetings. This allows East Herts councillors to consider agenda items in advance and discuss what local perspective needs to be voiced at the main Hertfordshire Scrutiny Committee.

These HCC meetings are also open to the public and details can be found through their main website.

http://www.hertsdirect.org/your-council/civic_calendar/healthscrut/ will take you through to their Health Scrutiny Committee meetings page.

Comment from Cllr Dorothy Hone (Chairman):

This has been a busy year for the Health Engagement Panel and I thank colleagues for their support. Work continues on the Public Health Strategy and the 3 year award from the Royal Society of Public Health will enable the Council to further develop public health effectiveness and encourage our residents in making healthy lifestyle choices to ensure wellbeing.

Changes in wider health services are now being finalised and there will be much to do to ensure continuity of good health provision and reassurance to all our residents in the coming year.

9. Environment Scrutiny

Councillors

D Hollebbon (Chairman)	P Gray
D Abbott	N Poulton
W Ashley	C Rowley (Vice Chairman)
S Basra	M Wood
R Beeching	J Wyllie

Substitutes:

Cllrs E Bedford, A Dearman and J Wing

Scrutiny:

- Collectively, our Refuse and Recycling contract along with the Street Cleansing and the Grounds Maintenance ones are the largest area of service expenditure for the council. An evaluation of the 'value for money' and residents' satisfaction of the services is always high on the scrutiny agenda. The first meeting of the year gives councillors the chance to look back at the previous year's performance and feedback.

Councillors regularly get key data via the 'Healthcheck' reports (as described on page 4) and this annual report is able to draw together the results and give a wider perspective on the services as a whole. Alongside the encouraging increase in percentage of household waste recycled and composted (up from 41.24% to 48.29%), officers were also able to report an increase in income from commercial refuse collection (up £77K), a slight reduction in the number of cases of larger fly tips (down 2%) and a continuing very low level of abandoned vehicles to be removed (only 14 in East Herts for the whole year). The continuing and improving high standard of grounds maintenance has helped East Herts in gaining/keeping Green Flag status for three of its main open spaces across the district.

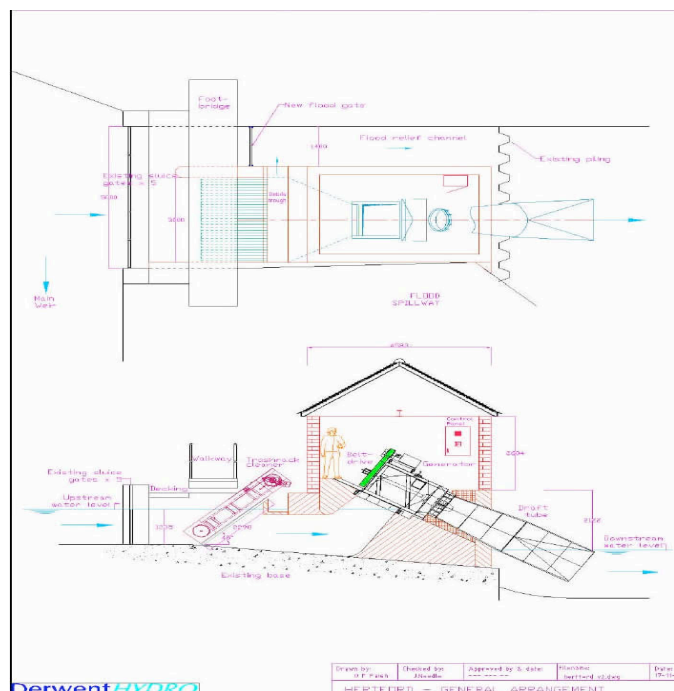
During the year, 900 inspections were carried out to check the standard of cleanliness in our district. Of these, only 1% was found to fall short regarding litter whilst 10% did not reach standard for 'detritus'. It is these anomalies that scrutiny wants to know more about. In this case the figure can be explained by the rural nature of so much of our district. Landslip from banks and verges following heavy rain tends to result in more detritus on rural roads than in districts with urban highways that have neat kerbs and pavements.

The committee, through the Chairman was able to congratulate officers and our contractors on an excellent year of results.

- In 2009 scrutiny members undertook a major piece of work on climate change which resulted in a new strategy for the council and a detailed action plan. This plan covered the council's own use of resources and resulting 'carbon footprint', the carbon footprint of our contractors and our role as a community leader in supporting the district as a whole to address the issue.

Despite best intentions, some of the projects have had to be put 'on hold' as funding from central government or agency partners was withdrawn as part of the budget constraints and financial cut backs.

This action plan was never going to be a 'quick-win' - many of the projects are long-term ones which take time to set up and evidence results. The delay which has disappointed scrutiny most is the hold up to the installation of a micro-hydro scheme at Castle Weir alongside Hertford Theatre. Long running discussions and negotiations with the Environment Agency has meant work could not start in summer 2011 as planned. The committee heard that the next window of opportunity to start would be when water levels are at their lowest in summer 2012 – but even this is not certain as the Environment Agency is still to give final permission. Multi agency working has its strengths – and its challenges.



Reviews:

- Scrutiny is always keen to check its recommendations have resulted in the outcomes they were looking for – and committees are open enough to acknowledge when things are not working as well as hoped

and prepared to modify their position. A 2009/10 task and finish group on Planning Enforcement had made some recommendations which had been running for a year to collect and collate data for analysis. The group reconvened after the year to look at the outcomes.

As a result of their review, the group modified their recommendations and acknowledged that some data they had requested did not add to either the efficiency or the effectiveness of the service – but did in fact add a burden of unnecessary administration on the staff. Their follow-up report evidenced the findings and redesigned the performance indicators required to focus only on those that have proved helpful and support the delivery of a high quality, responsive service to the public.

- The most demanding piece of work this year has been carried out by the task and finish group which has been developing a Parking and Transport strategy for East Herts. Scrutiny is not always about examining what we already do – but also about undertaking extensive research and recommending to the Executive and Council what we could aspire to in the future. The report from this cross-party group (chaired by Cllr McAndrew) looked at a strategy for the 10 year period from 2012 to 2022 and based its findings on feedback from 700 written responses from the public, meetings with town and parish councillors, discussions with focus groups in all 5 of our larger towns, data from the 2011 Residents' Survey, best practice examples from elsewhere, specialist/industry research and local, related documents.

The group recognised that there are real tensions between the economic, social and environmental aspects of parking and transport management – and their report and recommendations sought to find a pragmatic balance between them. The final report was well received by the full scrutiny committee and will be going forward to Executive and then to full Council at the start of the 2012/13 civic year – and news of the outcome will be available on the council website after 4 July 2012.

Comment from Cllr Diane Hollebon (Chairman):

Environmental Scrutiny has had a busy year with Task & Finish Groups still playing an important role within the Scrutiny function. To date we have reviewed Climate Change Action Plan; Parks & Open Spaces, with a new Group set up – the Parking and Transport Strategy. This Group has been particularly busy, looking at the overall picture affecting the whole District, liaising with the Towns and Rural areas to gauge the views of residents before final presentation of the Strategy to the Executive on 22 May 2012.

I wish to thank all Environmental Scrutiny Members for their support and I must also officially record my personal thanks to all the Officers for their hard work

10. External JOINT SCRUTINY and WORKING WITH COUNTY

During 2011/12, Hertfordshire County Council published the reports from several earlier topic groups and held several new topic groups, five of which have some interest for district and borough councils.

Details of these and all other HCC reviews can be found on Hertfordshire County Council's own website via the following link:

<http://www.hertsdirect.org/your-community/havesay/scrutiny/scrutinycomm/topics/>

In Summary:

- **Youth Connexions – an investigation into the new integrated youth support service (part 2)** (held 13 May 2011: report published 10 June 2011). East Herts Executive Member and an officer attended Part 1 of the topic group and the session held this May was a follow up review. The 2011 HCC topic group included Cllrs Ruffles, Andrews and Cheswright sitting as county councillors. The group wanted to look at the progress made since the new, integrated Youth Connexions Hertfordshire service was set up in April 2008.

Amongst their comments and recommendations:

- Councillors were pleased to hear of the joint working with district councils on the development of diversionary and positive action projects. They endorsed the need, in the current economic climate, for creative solutions to be found in order to maintain this provision.
- Councillors were also in support of the Channelmogo website and MogoZout youth portal which gave young people access to information – however, they remained concerned about the perceived lack of facilities in some rural areas and where access to town provision is difficult for those living in rural areas.

- **Highways Maintenance** - (held on 17 & 24 June 2011: report published 11 July 2011). The focus of the scrutiny was to assess the impact of maintenance strategies on road conditions. During the review, county councillors (including our CBS Chairman, Cllr Andrews) had the opportunity to take part in an 'option appraisal workshop'. This was based on a software programme which let councillors work through the impact that different scenarios would have on the highways network over future years. This allowed councillors to see the balance between cost and risk in taking decisions on the various engineering options open to them for any particular project.

Amongst their comments and recommendations:

- Councillors noted the key role played by districts/borough partners and found that the 'deep cleans' carried out jointly with some authorities works well and could be expanded to all areas.
- They recommended that Communications should be improved further (with the public and councillors) and that additional costs (particularly on restricted working hours) should be kept to the minimum necessary and savings used to fund the maintenance programme.
- Councillors did recommend sticking with the current holistic maintenance strategy. This is a Hybrid Balanced Approach which seeks to find the optimum

balance between undertaking preventative work and doing the 'worst-first' jobs to best manage the assets of the whole network.

- **Adoption of New Roads** – (held on 26 Sept 2011: report published 14 Oct 2011). The purpose of the scrutiny was to consider the effectiveness of the revised approach for adoption of new roads as public highway introduced in November 2009. The county council is the Highway Authority and has a responsibility to keep all adopted public roads and pavements safe for everyone to use – however, not all roads are adopted. Currently there is no need for the developer to submit adoption details to gain planning permission and they are unlikely to commit to the expense of preparing such detail until planning permission is gained.

Scrutiny members on the group (including Cllr Cheswright sitting as a county councillor) expressed their disappointment that no progress has been made nationally to change the law to give local authorities the power to oblige developers to enter into S38 Agreements in order that highways which meet HCC's revised approach for adoption of new roads can be adopted.

- **Crime & Disorder 2012 Scrutiny - Alcohol Misuse** (held on 4 & 5 Oct 2011: report published 19 Oct 2011). The purpose of this scrutiny was to consider the effectiveness of current interventions to reduce alcohol misuse and alcohol related crime and disorder. The scrutiny concentrated on the night time economy.

Amongst their wider recommendations, scrutiny members commended the work of the Street Pastors and Street Angels and asked for their appreciation to be passed onto the various voluntary groups operating across the county.








- **Bankside and River Pollution** – (held on 3 Nov 2011: report published 25 Jan 2012). The purpose of this scrutiny was to examine three main questions:
 1. Are water pollution and bankside issues on Hertfordshire's rivers a concern?
 2. Are there particular 'hotspots' for pollution in Hertfordshire?
 3. Whose responsibility is it to deal with the different types of pollution?








The Topic Group (which included Cllr Woodward sitting as a county councillor) made a number of recommendations to the Environment Agency, the Countryside Management Service and the County Council itself, but none specifically to district councils – except to note (*incorrectly*) that the district councils are the main litter agencies for all public rights of way. We are actually the litter authority for the public highway (not rights of way) and an example of an area of the highway adjacent to a river is on Folly Island, Hertford (below) and on last inspection the footpath here was given a very creditable grade B for litter.



11. EVALUATING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

During a previous scrutiny evaluation process a year ago, Councillors identified some areas where they wanted to make some improvements to scrutiny. This year they looked at what progress we had made in these areas during 2011/12:

What we wanted to achieve during 2011/12	Some examples of what we did towards this objective	How did we do?
Continue to look for ways to improve the level of community and public involvement in scrutiny	<p><i>The Parking and Transport strategy task and finish group drew directly on 700 public responses to a survey published in our LINK magazine and also held focus group meetings of residents, businesses and partners in each of the 5 main towns.</i></p> <p><i>The Community Safety review task and finish group held a Conversation Café on the issue at Hertford Theatre and drew evidence from the public's responses to the Community Safety Partnership questionnaire as well as carrying out their own survey (by councillors in their own wards).</i></p> <p><i>During 2011/12, no scrutiny topic suggestion came directly from a resident and we had no public attend a main formal committee meeting.</i></p>	  
Continue to bring evidence from independent or outside sources and make evidence easier to review	<p><i>The Parking and Transport strategy task and finish group used local and national material and published documents for benchmarking and drew on industry lead bodies for background research and examples of good practice.</i></p> <p><i>The Community Safety review task and finish group had the opportunity to meet and interview the newly appointed Chief Inspector for the district (on his second day in the post).</i></p> <p><i>Although improved, the presentation of complex financial data can still be daunting for new councillors – and by extension to the general public.</i></p>	  
Plan agendas well in advance, identify the 'value added' which scrutiny can bring to a topic and ensure this is monitored and recognised	<p><i>Advance items for each scrutiny committee agenda are notified at least six months in advance (and some up to 12 months) and agreed by councillors at each meeting. This information is available to the public on request or via the council's website.</i></p> <p><i>All task and finish groups have a scoping document prepared and agreed to clarify what will and will not be covered by the review and to list the outcomes.</i></p> <p><i>Although improved, some issues still come to scrutiny too far down the line/too late to effect any</i></p>	 











	<i>significant changes. Also, not enough publicity is given to the linkage between improved/high quality services and the role scrutiny has played in achieving these.</i>	
Continue to keep scrutiny councillors informed and offer opportunities to develop skills needed	<p><i>An e-Newsletter (Scrutiny Matters) is written and circulated to all councillors every six months. The weekly Members' Information Bulletin is used to update councillors of any significant scrutiny news and as a reminder for any internal scrutiny activity.</i></p> <p><i>All newly elected councillors were sent a scrutiny induction pack at the start of the civic year.</i></p> <p><i>Regular scrutiny related training was available to councillors throughout the year as part of their wider development programme. (Details of 2011/12 activity listed in Section 14 of this report).</i></p> <p><i>District councillors tend to be very active within their own communities (town/parish councils, housing association bodies, voluntary/community group etc) and it is difficult to arrange training at a time which they can all attend.</i></p>	   
Scrutiny of external public bodies and partners	<p><i>The Health Engagement Panel had external visitors/partners attending every one of its meetings during 2011/12. These are listed on page 14/15 of this report.</i></p> <p><i>The leisure provider SLM attended Community Scrutiny and responded in detail to a set of themed questions prepared in advance – with different members of the committee leading on each theme.</i></p> <p><i>No external Joint Scrutiny was undertaken during 2011/12 and East Herts did not submit any formal evidence directly to a County review as no topic on the agenda lent itself to this approach.</i></p>	 

The Directors and the Executive members were canvassed for written feedback and asked for examples of how the scrutiny process in 2011/12 had supported the work of the council and asking for specific areas to strengthen during 2012/13.

The responses show an Executive open to scrutiny and a willingness to develop the 'critical friend' relationship with stronger challenge coming from scrutiny members. There is also the 'reality check' - with scrutiny having to be undertaken in the light of the existing economic climate and a shared understanding of why some difficult choices and changes need to be made.

Scrutiny committee members were all invited to workshops in April 2012 to evaluate their performance in 2011/12. A written response form was also made available to those councillors who could not attend the interactive sessions.

Councillors were asked to look at how well the scrutiny activity in East Herts matches up to the four principles of good practice set out by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (refer back to CfPS diagram on page 1 of this report). Their responses mirrored the feeling expressed last year: it is a 'work in progress' and there are always improvements and new approaches to be tried out.

CfPS principle	Some examples of what we did towards this .. and what we need to build on ..	How did we do?
<p>provides 'critical friend' challenge to executive policy-makers and decision-makers</p>	<p><i>Challenged the plans for Discretionary Rate Relief and got the Executive to look again at some categories.</i></p> <p><i>With so many newly elected councillors in 2011/12 – need time to build knowledge, experience and confidence to challenge.</i></p>	<p> </p>
<p>enables the voice and concerns of the public and its communities</p>	<p><i>Scrutiny made extensive use of written survey and questionnaire responses from residents and held focus groups specifically to allow the voice and concerns of the communities to be heard.</i></p> <p><i>Low public response rate to on-line consultations – need councillors to become familiar with and actively promote newer channels of communication.</i></p>	<p> </p>
<p>is carried out by 'independent-minded governors' who lead and own the scrutiny role</p>	<p><i>Task and finish groups set the agenda and 'own' their recommendations and reports submitted in their name.</i></p> <p><i>With so many newly elected councillors in 2011/12 – need time to build knowledge, experience and confidence to lead.</i></p>	<p> </p>
<p>drives improvement in public services</p>	<p><i>Recommended a simplification to the Community Grants 'pots' and asked for the funding to be themed for the Jubilee and Olympic year.</i></p> <p><i>Promoted wider use of 'purple folder' in local hospital to support communication for people with a learning disability.</i></p> <p><i>'Ageing Well' issues embedded across services and future developments following the scrutiny debate with Executive Member.</i></p> <p><i>Role of scrutiny in driving improvement can get 'lost' – especially if councillors themselves don't recognise the links and celebrate success.</i></p>	<p>   </p>

12. WHAT ARE OUR PLANS FOR 2012/13?

Councillors have identified some areas in which they would like to further strengthen scrutiny in 2012/13:

What we want to do?	How are we going to do it? – an action plan for 2012/13
Actively look for ways to improve the level of community and public involvement in scrutiny	<p><i>Continue to develop the 'Community Leadership' role of councillors in their wards and take scrutiny 'out' to residents wherever possible.</i></p> <p><i>Encourage topic suggestions from residents and explore idea of getting issues raised through town/parish councils and youth councils.</i></p> <p><i>Councillors to raise awareness of the on-line budget consultation process open to residents and the business community and support officers in widening the consultation to other 'seldom heard' groups in order to provide scrutiny with more external views and opinions (eg when asked to undertake surveys within their own ward).</i></p>
Strengthen use of evidence from independent or outside sources and plan approach to questioning	<p><i>Find cost effective and timely ways of bringing external evidence into any review – through expert witnesses (including more external experts in person or by written submission of evidence), visits where appropriate, surveys/questionnaires, published documents and good practice examples from similar authorities.</i></p> <p><i>Make more use of themed topics and pre-planned questions to gather evidence.</i></p>
Clearly identify the 'value added' which scrutiny can bring to a topic and ensure this is monitored and recognised	<p><i>Focus scrutiny reviews on topics where there is real scope for influencing change and where measurable benefits for residents can be seen.</i></p> <p><i>Be clear about scrutiny role and impact in respect of agenda item choices and reports brought to committee.</i></p> <p><i>Identify outcomes which can be used in council publications to illustrate the positive impact of scrutiny to raise awareness.</i></p>
Continue to keep scrutiny members informed and offer opportunities to develop skills needed	<p><i>Continue publishing an e-Newsletter every 6 months and make use of weekly bulletin (MIB) to update councillors on significant issues/developments and confirm scrutiny related events.</i></p> <p><i>Offer councillors 'pre briefing' material where relevant to widen knowledge and understand context/background to topics.</i></p> <p><i>Ensure training opportunities are well publicised and suitable options are available for both new and experienced councillors. Test out a range of different learning approaches to meet the needs of councillors and fit into other time constraints they might have.</i></p>
Strengthen scrutiny of external public bodies and partners	<p><i>Move from 'scrutiny of' to 'scrutiny with' partners when reviewing local services offered to residents.</i></p> <p><i>Identify opportunities (jointly with other councils where possible for efficiency) to scrutinise aspects of the LSP or a common issue.</i></p>

Work programmes

At the end of the year, councillors were asked to agree outline agendas for their 2012/13 meetings - but there is flexibility to review and amend them throughout the year to keep the work of scrutiny relevant and topical.

Topics already confirmed:

CBS has already agreed to	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comments, Compliments and Complaints• Review of Community and Public Engagement action plan (particularly the A5 size LINK magazine and the use of social media)
Community Scrutiny has already agreed to	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Annual Report for Hertford Theatre• East Herts Sustainable Communities Strategy – a focus on the 3 new Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) priorities• Community Grants: review of applications and allocation for Q1/2 & Q3/4
Health Eng Panel has already agreed to	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• HCC Health and Wellbeing strategy – respond to consultation• Speaker – new Director of Public Health (after he takes up post July 2012)• Speaker – HealthWatch (once new arrangements are in place)
Environment Scrutiny has already agreed to	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Report on the new recycling ‘drive’ (Project Surge)• Parks and Open Spaces: end of current 2007/12 strategy and draft for a new one• Climate Change action plan – progress against action plan with data/results of carbon and cost savings generated

The most up to date versions of all the topics scheduled for each committee can be found under the papers published on the East Herts website (<http://online.eastherts.gov.uk/moderngov/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1> will take you to the most recent ‘Work Programme’ report under each scrutiny meeting agenda).

The committees may wish to add to their work programmes by selecting from a list of ‘reserve’ topics drawn from a number of sources. To date, there are a number of issues expected to come under closer scrutiny during 2012/13, including:

- Review of our Taxi Licensing policy and procedures
- Review of our Environmental Crime policies (when new legislation is finalised and guidance published)
- Review of our Grounds’ Maintenance Contract (due for renewal)

As every year, a short article about scrutiny was printed in the council's regular LINK magazine which goes to every household in the district. The spring edition, delivered during March 2012, invited residents to suggest any issues for consideration by the scrutiny committees during the coming year.



What should we scrutinise?
 East Herts Council's scrutiny committees want to hear from you as they prepare their programme for the year.
 The committees are the council's watchdogs, with powers to examine issues of broad local concern – but not individual complaints – and make recommendations. Call the council's scrutiny officer on 01279 655261 with your suggestions or email scrutiny@eastherts.gov.uk

The new 2012/13 scrutiny committee members will make the final decision as to which topics are added to their committee agenda or set up for more detailed review by a task and finish group.

All the work of the 2012/13 scrutiny committees will focus on helping to deliver the three new corporate priorities of East Herts Council:

PEOPLE:
This priority focuses on enhancing the quality of life, health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, particularly those who are vulnerable.
PLACE:
This priority focuses on the standard of the built environment and our neighbourhoods and ensuring our towns and villages are safe and clean.
PROSPERITY:
This priority focuses on safeguarding and enhancing our unique mix of rural and urban communities, promoting sustainable, economic and social opportunities.

Our task and finish groups tend to meet several times, spread out over a number of months and this is appropriate when evidence needs to be gathered over time. However, there may be some topics which could benefit from 1 or 2 day scrutiny, where councillors can be immersed in an issue over a shorter period of time – making recommendations based on fresh and immediate evidence.

Although this approach was not used during last year, the pressure of reduced resources may make it a more appropriate method during 2012/13.

13. THE EVOLVING ROLE OF SCRUTINY

There are general implications for scrutiny arising from the government's new legislation:

- the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011
- the Localism Act 2011 and
- the Health and Social Care Act 2012

Powers in all three pieces of legislation – and in other legislation enacted by the current government – emphasise the importance of partnership working in the future delivery of public services. Large-scale commissioning, more joint working and different attitudes to procurement will mean that the way that services are delivered will be subject to profound change in the coming months and years.

While this may initially suggest that scrutiny will need to look at more “external services”, the challenge is in fact more fundamental than this. Increasingly, council business is delivered in partnership with others and the contents of the Acts will only serve to accelerate this trend. It will become more difficult to distinguish between “internal” council-only services and “external” ones delivered by partners. The merging of the two will mean that the way in which scrutiny deals with all issues across a local area will need to be harmonised.

This may involve a number of changes:

- More proactive consultation and discussion with partners about the scrutiny work programme (we consult members and officers within the council but it is less usual to speak to partners more widely);
- A better understanding of scrutiny by partners more generally and if necessary develop a protocol to define relationships in the future, focusing on improvement and the avoidance of duplication;
- More scrutiny on specific issues, that may **involve** partners, rather than “scrutiny **of** partners”. Traditionally, partners may have been invited to give evidence to scrutiny committees to give an account of their general work. It may make more sense to integrate evidence from partners into scrutiny reviews of “issues” affecting local people;
- More joint scrutiny. The administrative boundaries of some partners or partnerships may not be coterminous with those of the local authority. More informal or formal joint working may be necessary – particularly in two tier areas.

Into this complex landscape, scrutiny, with its broader powers over partners, will have to find a niche. In practice, this may mean that scrutiny will be carrying out more joint work with other bodies and agencies to pursue areas of mutual interest.

For example, with others, our local authority scrutiny function might

- collaborate with tenant scrutiny panels to jointly challenge housing providers in the local area,
- draw evidence from Local HealthWatch to challenge health and social care providers,
- share information with Police and Crime Panels.

Apart from enhancing the scope and profile of scrutiny work, this could provide a focus to target resources more effectively.

Central inspection is largely being withdrawn in the new landscape, replaced by the use of 'market forces', direct elections and transparency as means to ensure local accountability. Local people, and their representatives, are being expected to take a stronger role in securing accountable and effective services.

Going forward, there is a key role for scrutiny to play in allowing our directly elected district councillors to drive the local improvement process, to maintain momentum and to provide constructive scrutiny based on challenging traditional approaches to service delivery.



www.parliament.uk

General information on the new Acts can be found on the parliament website and details of the legislation are on the specialist pages below:

Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/13/contents/enacted>

Localism Act 2011

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/contents>

Health and Social Care Act 2012

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/7/contents/enacted>

14. TRAINING

As part of a much wider training programme, councillors from East Herts attended the following scrutiny related events during 2011/12:

Date	Event/session	Delivered by ...
24 May 2011	Group and tutorial-style training on 'Covalent' (the Corporate Performance Management software designed specifically for the public sector and used by East Herts) – to give councillors the skills to look up any information they are interested in, at any time. "Data Quality" – to explain all the checks that are carried out on statistics and information before they are reported to ensure decisions made by councillors are based on sound evidence	In-house by the Performance team – delivered as part of the Induction training for newly elected councillors and a refresher for returning councillors
31 May 2011	Effective Scrutiny (Part 1) – The Process	In-house by an experienced councillor
14 June 2011	Effective Scrutiny (Part 2) – Questioning Techniques	In-house by an experienced councillor
16 June 2011	Chairing Skills	by a visiting external trainer
13 July 2011	'Mock' scrutiny committee meeting – a practical exercise designed for newly elected councillors	In-house by scrutiny officer and CBS Chairman
Autumn 2011- Spring 2012	East Herts councillors attended (with officers) all 4 Local Health Network meetings: including the March meeting of LHN which focused on how we can strengthen accountability at all levels for local healthcare and public health policy, planning and delivery. A key focus was the role of councillors and scrutiny and how councils can work with community and service users and local HealthWatch.	Local Government Information Unit (LGiU) in London
17 Jan 2012	Local Government Finance	In-house by Director of Internal Services
24 Jan 2012	Parliamentary Seminar Series – focusing on scrutiny chairing skills	CfPS held at the Houses of Parliament
31 Jan 2012	Scrutiny Skills development workshop	In-house by scrutiny officer
13 Mar 2012	Chairing for scrutiny (organised by Watford BC)	South East Employers
17 April 2012	Scrutiny Evaluation workshop – reflecting on the past year 2011/12	In-house by scrutiny officer and scrutiny Chairmen
24 April 2012	Scrutiny Topic Planning – looking forward to 2012/13	In-house by scrutiny officer and scrutiny Chairmen

A continuing training programme will be needed to keep all councillors briefed on their developing role as described above in Section 13 and offer them the chance to strengthen their scrutiny skills.

Councillors have indicated an interest in some specific areas of scrutiny related training for the coming year:

- Chairing Scrutiny
- Scrutiny 'with' partners and 'of' partners
- Planning questioning and gathering evidence

15. AND FINALLY

The scrutiny function is greatly enhanced by co-operative working between all parties – and that includes East Herts residents. All our committee meetings are open to the public and anyone can suggest a topic for scrutiny. Contact us directly or talk to your local district councillor and let us know what is concerning you.



Contact details for all our councillors are on the East Herts Council website <http://online.eastherts.gov.uk/moderngov/mgMemberIndex.aspx?bcr=1>

Introduce yourself and get to know more about how we can work together to keep East Herts a great place to live, work and study in.

If you want more information on scrutiny in general, this can be found on the Centre for Public Scrutiny main website on <http://www.cfps.org.uk/>

There will be a limited print run of this document.

Greater use will be made of signposting interested parties, partners and residents to the Council's website to access the Scrutiny Annual Report. This will minimise use of material resources, distribution costs and gain potential CO₂ efficiencies from on-line provision.

<http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/scrutinyannualreports>

If you do require a paper copy, there will be a limited number available at the reception desk at Wallfields in Hertford and at our Customer Service Centre in Charringtons House, Bishop's Stortford – or contact the Scrutiny Officer on 01992 531612 : e-mail scrutiny@eastherts.gov.uk

If you would like a translation of this document in another language, large print, Braille, audio or electronic, please contact Communications at East Herts Council on email communications@eastherts.gov.uk or by calling 01279 655261.