

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON TUESDAY
28 AUGUST 2012, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor G McAndrew (Chairman)
Councillors R Beeching, T Herbert,
Mrs D Hollebon, C Rowley, N Symonds, M
Wood and C Woodward

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors L Haysey and P Ruffles

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Claire Bennett	- Manager of Housing Services
Lorraine Blackburn	- Democratic Services Officer
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
Marianne McWhinnie	- Engagement and Partnership Officer
Paul Newman	- Licensing Manager
Will O'Neill	- Head of Communications, Engagement and Cultural Services
Emma Parlow	- Marketing and Audience Development Manager
Mekhola Ray	- Community Projects Team Manager
George A Robertson	- Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services
Brian Simmonds	- Head of

Rhys Thomas

Community Safety
and Health
Services
- Arts and
Entertainment
Programme
Director

267 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors S Bull and Mrs D Hone. It was noted that Councillor C Rowley was substituting for Councillor S Bull.

268 MINUTES

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

269 HEALTH ENGAGEMENT PANEL

Councillor N Symonds, Chairman of the Health Engagement Panel, provided a summary of the recent work the Panel,

The Committee received the report and noted the Minutes.

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

(B) the Minutes of the Panel meeting held on 19 June 2012, be noted.

270 HEALTH ENGAGEMENT PANEL: PROPOSED CHANGE OF NAME

Councillor N Symonds, the Chairman of Health, Engagement Panel submitted a report outlining a proposed name change for the Health Engagement Panel to one which would reflect the changing focus of its priorities and in order to reflect local and national health agendas and priorities. Councillor L Haysey, Executive Member for Health, Housing and

Community Support stated that a newly named “Health and Wellbeing Panel” would provide a broader basis on which to continue to develop the ongoing and strong work of the Panel.

The Committee supported the proposal to change the Panel’s name to the “Health and Wellbeing Panel”.

RESOLVED – that with immediate effect, the Health and Engagement Panel be renamed the “Health and Wellbeing Panel”.

271 EAST HERTS "AGEING WELL" - REVIEW OF PROGRESS

The Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support submitted a report updating Members on the progress of the East Herts Ageing Well agenda following recommendations made by Community Scrutiny Committee on 28 February 2012, the detail of which was set out in the report now submitted. The Engagement and Partnerships Team Leader summarised the recommendations and role of the Council in engaging with older people. It was noted that from research already undertaken by Members on the Working Group, there were 148 groups providing a range of services to older people, which the Council could use as the foundation of a database for future engagement and consultation.

In response to a query from Councillor G McAndrew and what steps the Council was taking to include the rural community, Councillor L Haysey explained that there would be an Ageing Well item on the Rural Conference agenda.

In response to a query from Councillor C Woodward regarding encouraging businesses to be “older people friendly”, the Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services reminded Members that there were now no work age limitations in terms of economic activity.

The Chairman referred to the positive progress made in relation to age and well being and how this was becoming embedded within the community.

The Committee noted the progress made against the recommendations made at its meeting held on 28 February 2012, and agreed that the Executive be asked to support the ambitions set out in paragraph 2.9 of the report now submitted and that these be integrated into the strategic policy making of the Council, via the Equalities Impact Assessment.

RESOLVED – that (A) the progress made against the three recommendations made at the meeting of Community Scrutiny Committee held on 28 February 2012 be noted; and

(B) the Executive be requested to support the ambitions as detailed in paragraph 2.9 of the report now submitted, and that these be integrated into the strategic policy making of the Council, via the Equalities Impact Assessment.

272 HERTFORD THEATRE - ANNUAL REPORT 2011/12

The Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support submitted a report which provided an annual review of Hertford Theatre for the year 2011/12. The Head of Communications, Engagement and Cultural Services referred to the success of the Theatre and summarised the highlights of its first full year of trading from April 2011 to the end of March 2012, the detail of which was set out in the report now submitted.

Councillor M Wood agreed that the report was a “good news” story but expressed concern regarding the deficit in relation to the Pantomime and sought assurances that this was being properly marketed. He referred to the total outturn and expenditure figures for 2011/12 and the net difference shown. The Head of Communications Engagement and Cultural Services stated that the Theatre was running ahead of its target in the ten-year Business Plan and over-performing against payback timeframes. He reminded Members of the Theatre’s new vision statement and that a new governance arrangement would be reviewed in a year’s time following a review of best practice. The Head of Communications, Engagement and Cultural Services advised Members that the

pantomime marketing budget was ring fenced.

In response to a query regarding apprenticeships by Councillor G McAndrew, the Head of Communications, Engagement and Cultural Services advised that this had been very successful and it was hoped that the skills of the technical apprentice could be retained in-house. The Theatre Director stated that he was keen on progressing apprenticeship schemes and referred to the successful use of the Theatre's 76 volunteers.

In response to a query regarding sharing acts with The Rhodes Arts Complex by Councillor G McAndrew, the Director of Hertford Theatre advised that both theatres were in constant dialogue on this issue adding that one such project would be the introduction of the Art Bus in October 2012.

In response to a query regarding the database of schools, and the Theatre becoming involved in GCSE and A-Level syllabi in terms of performances, the Director of Hertford Theatre advised that there were ongoing efforts to work with schools to co-ordinate on the curriculum.

In relation to marketing, the Marketing and Audience Development Manager provided a summary of the Theatre's "reach", its Facebook and Twitter activity, the emailing list, press database and ongoing work with schools and how this compared with the former Castle Hall.

The Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services referred to the team's efforts which had contributed to the success of Hertford Theatre over the last 18 months. He stated that the Theatre was a challenging business to run and referred to the many issues which had been overcome.

The Chairman, on behalf of Members thanked the Officers for their hard work in contributing to the success story.

The Committee noted the Annual Report on Hertford Theatre 2011/12 and thanked Officers for their hard work.

RESOLVED – that (A) the report be noted; and

(B) Members' thanks to Officers and the staff team at the Theatre for their hard work be recorded.

273 REVIEW OF TAXI LICENSING IN EAST HERTS - INITIAL REPORT AND SCOPE

The Chairman of the Task and finish group submitted a report summarising the first stages of a review of Taxi Licensing in East Herts, the detail of which, was set out in the report now submitted.

In response to a query regarding consultation processes, the Head of Community Safety and Health Services stated that there was an active Taxi Driver Association which would be contacted and any independent taxi drivers would also be invited to future meetings.

In response to a query concerning "fly parking", the Head of Community Safety and Health Services stated that this was an issue which the Council would be reviewing.

The Committee noted the report and agreed the scope of the review.

RESOLVED – that (A) the scoping document for the review of Taxi Licensing in East Herts be agreed; and

(B) the Task and Finish Group report back to Community Scrutiny Committee in November, 2012.

274 HOUSING STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2012 - 2015

The Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support Community submitted a report setting out the action plan for the Council's new Housing Strategy for 2012/15, the detail of which was set out in the report now submitted. The Housing Services Manager referred Members to Essential Reference Paper "B" of the report now submitted, which set out the three key responsibilities for Housing Associations in relation to the Housing Strategy.

Councillor C Woodward referred to Objective 3 (Meeting the needs of vulnerable people and stronger communities) and suggested that the Council needed to impart a stronger emphasis on this issue, particularly in relation to the needs of the Armed Forces. The Housing Services Manager stated that the Council was aware of the needs of Armed Forces personnel and was doing all it could. Officers would continue to use their discretion in this capacity. She explained that without the force of legislation, the Council's role was limited.

Councillor G McAndrew empathised with personnel who left the force and were suddenly faced with the need to find a home, a job, doctors and schools. He stated that anything the Council could do to make things easier for Armed Forces personnel should be done. The Housing Services Manager added that the Forces' own housing advice was very good.

The Committee supported the Housing Strategy 2012/15 and Action Plan and requested that the Executive be asked to support the Action Plan alongside the main Housing Strategy document. Members also agreed that they be provided with an Annual Report on the progress of the Action Plan each September, or on whatever date was considered most expeditious.

RESOLVED – that (A) the Housing Strategy 2012/15 and Action Plan be supported together with Members' comments and the Executive be asked to support the Action Plan alongside the main Housing Strategy document; and

(B) Community Scrutiny Committee be provided with an Annual Report on the progress of the Action Plan each September, or on whatever date was considered to be most expeditious.

275 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR RIVERSMEAD AND SOUTH ANGLIA HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS 2011/12

The Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support submitted a report on the progress made on the two

large scale voluntary transfer housing associations and the three undertakings which remained following the end of the Delivery of Promises Programme in 2007.

The Housing Services Manager expressed concern that there had been a lot of enquiries in relation to Right to Buy but virtually no sales, which was considered to be attributable to the cost of properties in the East Hertfordshire District. The Housing Services Manager also expressed concern at the slow down by the County Council, in processing requests for adaptations. She referred to recent re-structure at the County Council which had had a knock on effect.

Councillor C Woodward commented on the number of complaints he and other Councillors had received in relation to garages, their condition and lack of maintenance. He stated that Housing Associations should be requested to maintain them.

Councillor N Symonds referred to the slow down in processing requests for adaptations suggesting that this was possibly attributable to the shortage of Occupational Therapists available to carry out the formal assessment of need.

Councillor P Ruffles commented on the improvements over the last 10 years in terms of engagement with Housing Associations. He stated that the west of the District did not suffer to the same level in terms of garage issues. Members commented generally on the good rapport that existed with Housing Associations.

In response to a query from Councillor G McAndrew regarding under and over occupancy, the Housing Services Manager explained the "swap" procedure and the incentives on offer. She also referred to "Bedroom Tax" which would be introduced from October 2012.

Councillor M Wood suggested that in considering the issue of garages, there was a need to balance matters, adding that garages were an issue when the Council had responsibility for them.

The Committee noted the performance of Riversmead and South Anglia Housing Associations on the three remaining stock transfer undertakings for the year 2011/12 and asked Officers to pass on Members' concerns regarding the general maintenance of garages.

RESOLVED – that (A) the performance of Riversmead and South Anglia Housing Associations on the three remaining stock transfer undertakings for the year 2011/12 be noted; and

(B) Officers be requested to pass on Members' concerns regarding the general maintenance of garages.

276 COMMUNITY SCRUTINY CORPORATE HEALTHCHECK
(APRIL - JUNE 2012)

The Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services submitted a report on the performance of key indicators relating to Community Scrutiny Committee for the period April - June 2012.

Councillor N Symonds thanked Officers for taking the issue of housing benefits seriously.

The Committee received the report.

RESOLVED – that (A) the performance for the period April to June 2012 be noted.

277 WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Officer submitted a report outlining the future work of the Community Scrutiny Committee. She stated that the Annual Equalities Report should be deleted from the work programme and that a statement would be put in the Members' Information Bulletin. It was noted that in relation to an item proposed for March 2013 on the issue of "Crime and Disorder", Members would be advised of topical issues by the Head of Community Safety and Health Services, closer to the date of the Committee from which they could make a choice.

The Committee supported the updates.

RESOLVED – that the work programme, as amended,
be approved.

The meeting closed at 8.15 pm

Chairman
Date