

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON TUESDAY
23 SEPTEMBER 2014, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs D Hollebon (Chairman).
Councillors S Bull, G Cutting, J Mayes,
N Symonds and M Wood.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors D Andrews, L Haysey, P Ruffles
and S Rutland-Barsby.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Claire Bennett	- Manager of Housing Services
Ben Cannell	- Front of House Manager
Louise Harris	- Housing Strategy and Development Manager
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
Peter Mannings	- Democratic Services Officer
Emma Parlow	- Marketing and Audience Development Manager
Will O'Neill	- Head of Communications, Engagement and Cultural Services
Mekhola Ray	- Community Projects Team Manager
George A Robertson	- Chief Executive and Director of Customer and

Rhys Thomas

Community
Services
- Arts and
Entertainment
Programme
Director

242 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors J Jones, P Moore, K Warnell and J Wyllie.

243 MINUTES – 26 JUNE 2014

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

244 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Ben Cannell, Emma Parlow and Rhys Thomas from Hertford Theatre to the meeting. She also welcomed Louise Harris, Housing Strategy and Development Manager, to her first meeting of Community Scrutiny Committee.

245 HEALTH AND WELLBEING PANEL

The Chairman of the Health and Wellbeing Panel provided Members with an update on the work of the Panel. Councillor Symonds asked that the issue of debt remain with the Panel for the time being. She stated that the issue would be discussed with the Citizens' Advice Bureau (EHCAS) at their visit to the Panel in February 2015.

Councillor Symonds stated that there had been no meetings to feed back on at Hertfordshire County Council. She reported that the County Council would be giving the authority a 'District Offer' of £100,000 per annum for two years to support the work of Public Health delivery in the

District. The Panel would be scrutinising all the bids to ensure that funding was used for its intended purpose.

Councillor Symonds advised that she had attended a useful East and North Herts NHS Trust AGM meeting and she had met speakers who might address the Panel in future. She referred to the recent Bishop's Stortford GPs Survey, the results of which were being submitted to NHS England tomorrow.

Councillor Symonds advised that she would be attending a Health Scrutiny meeting at Watford General Hospital on the 21 October 2014. She also referred to a meeting she hoped to attend on the 17 October 2014 relating to ambulance response times.

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

(B) the Minutes of the Health and Wellbeing Panel meeting held on 17 June 2014 be noted.

246 HERTFORD THEATRE – ANNUAL REPORT

The Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support submitted a report on the annual performance of Hertford Theatre for the Financial Year 2013/14, the detail of which was set out in the report now submitted and the Essential Reference Papers.

Members were advised that this was the fourth annual report and Officers were pleased to advise that the business of the Theatre continued to grow. The Head of Communications, Engagement and Cultural Services invited the Hertford Theatre management team to update Members in more detail in respect of the Theatre's business.

The Director of Hertford Theatre advised that there had been several well attended shows and some very strong family audiences at the Theatre. A particular highlight

had been “Billy Goats Gruff” in association with the Hertfordshire Children’s Book Festival.

Members were advised that the Theatre had established a relationship with the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) and live broadcasts of their work had been shown at Hertford Theatre. There was also an ongoing good relationship with the National Theatre. The Theatre Director emphasised however that priority was always given to local groups such as the Ware Operatic Society and the Hertford Symphony Orchestra.

The Theatre Director concluded that there was a long standing working relationship with Hertford Regional College and Hertford Theatre.

The Marketing Manager updated Members in respect of the new website, which had been enhanced by the display of video content as well as a wide range of helpful information for visitors. She stated that the Theatre now had more information on social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook. Members were also advised that all of the Hertford Schools had now engaged with Hertford Theatre.

The Front of House Manager referred to the sense of community at the venue. He stated that the Theatre worked well with local businesses in attracting new audiences. He also referred to the 80 people who assisted the venue as part of its volunteer programme. Members were advised that the Theatre received consistently good feedback and the staff who worked there had got to know the audience very well.

Councillor J Mayes stated that she was very pleased by the report and that she endorsed the work of the volunteers at Hertford Theatre. She also praised the good, all-round achievements of everyone who worked at the venue. Councillor N Symonds referred to a young student from Bishop’s Stortford who had spoken very positively about the acting training she was receiving at

Hertford Theatre as part of her course.

Councillor M Wood congratulated Hertford Theatre for the all-round good news. He praised the venue for the figures relating to the performance of its cinema programme. He congratulated the venue on its new seating and queried whether the pantomime budget was in surplus or deficit.

The Theatre's Director advised that the Pantomime business of the Theatre had delivered a surplus of £18,000. In response to a query from Councillor Wood, the Front of House Manager explained that, where possible, he tried to give the volunteers the shows they had requested on the basis that they supported the venue at other events as required.

Councillor Wood commented that the comedy shows seemed to be doing particularly well at Hertford Theatre. He stated that straight drama appeared to be more of a challenge for the venue. The Theatre's Director acknowledged that, as with most venues, drama had proved to be a 'hard sell'. He stated that he had identified a company which had agreed to work with local schools to create drama productions. The company would then tour the subsequently created work.

Members received the Annual Report on Hertford Theatre for the year 2013/14 and congratulated and thanked the cohort of volunteers for their contribution to the success of the venue. Members also thanked the Officers who worked for the Theatre and requested a further annual report be submitted in 2015.

RESOLVED – that (A) the Annual Report on Hertford Theatre for the year 2013/14 be received;

(B) the cohort of volunteers and Officers who worked for Hertford Theatre be congratulated and thanked for their contribution to the success of the venue; and

(C) Officers submit a further annual report in respect of Hertford Theatre to Community Scrutiny Committee in 2015.

247 UPDATE ON THE AGEING WELL INITIATIVE

The Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support submitted an update report in respect of the East Herts Local Strategic Partnership's (LSP) initiative on the District wide Ageing Well programme.

The Engagement and Partnerships Team Leader advised that a workshop had been held in June 2013 to explore how agencies could work together to promote the health and wellbeing and independence of older people so that they lived healthier lives that were free from disability and pain for as long as possible.

The list of agencies represented at the workshop was presented at Essential Reference Paper 'B' and the membership of the Ageing Well Steering Group was detailed at Essential Reference Paper 'C'.

Members were advised that two very successful eight week pilots of 'Fitsteps' had taken place in the Methodist Church in Bishop's Stortford and Ware Drill Hall in April and May 2014 respectively. The sessions had been subsidised by the Council's sports development fund and the objective was to recruit volunteers from within the group to carry on without an instructor once the volunteers were trained.

The Engagement and Partnerships Team Leader advised that there had been two awareness raising sessions run by the Alzheimer's society in respect of Dementia Friends for both Members and Staff in July 2014. The sessions had been very useful and well attended and a third session would take place on the 23 October 2014 in the Council Chamber, Wallfields. Members were advised of the possibility of developing Dementia Friendly Cafes and

outlets across East Herts.

Members were advised that a partnership had been developed to submit a bid to Sport England for £250,000 over 3 years with match funding from Public Health District offer money and the Council's sports development budget to enable the partnership to run a District wide rural programme aimed at increasing participation in sport and physical activity by the over 60s.

The Engagement and Partnerships Team Leader emphasised that initial feedback from Sport England was that the bid from East Herts would be stronger if there was a clear strategic context and Executive support.

Members received the report and endorsed the recommendations. Members also requested that an annual update report be submitted to the 22 September 2015 meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED – that (A) the Sport England bid be supported and the progress being made by the multi-agency Ageing Well steering group be noted;

(B) the Executive be advised that the Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support should be invited to join the Project Steering Group to provide the necessary strategic input, as detailed at paragraph 2.19 of the report now submitted; and

(C) an annual update report be submitted to the 22 September 2015 meeting of the Committee in respect of further progress on Ageing Well projects.

248 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR RIVERSMEAD
AND CIRCLE HOUSING SOUTH ANGLIA HOUSING
ASSOCIATIONS

The Executive Member for Health, Housing and

Community Support submitted a report on the progress made by the two large scale voluntary transfer housing associations on the three undertakings that remain following the end of the Delivery of Promises Programme in 2007, the detail of which was set out in the report now submitted.

The Housing Services Manager reminded Members that two housing associations managed the Council's housing stock as registered providers. Members were advised that the Stock Transfer Nomination Agreement stated that the two housing associations must give the Council 3 out of every 4 of their vacant homes for the Council to nominate to households on its Housing Register. The percentage nomination to vacant homes for both registered providers was currently 100% against a target of 75%.

The Housing Services Manager stated that the current spend on aids and adaptations was increasing each year in line with the retail prices index (RPI). Members were advised that there was a target of 40 homes per annum that should be sold under the preserved Right to Buy scheme. In 2013/14, Riversmead Housing Association had sold 7 properties and Circle Housing South Anglia had sold 4 properties, a total of 11.

Councillor M Wood commented on the East Herts Council input into the targets in respect of aids and adaptations. Members were advised that the Council had the ability to award Disabled Facilities grants in respect of larger extensions. Members received the performance report on Riversmead and Circle Housing South Anglia Housing Associations.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

249 MONITORING AND REVIEW OF HOUSING STRATEGY
ACTION PLAN 2013 – 2016

The Executive Member for Health, Housing and

Community Support submitted a report in respect of the progress on the delivery of the Housing Strategy Action Plan 2013 – 2016 for consideration and comment, the detail of which was set out in the supporting Essential Reference Paper.

The Housing Strategy and Development Manager advised that the 2013 – 2016 Housing Strategy was a high level strategy and the action plan looked to aid the Strategic Objectives in order to maximize the delivery of new affordable homes whilst ensuring the best use of existing housing.

The Housing Strategy and Development Manager stated that Officers were working to support the 3 strategic objectives, in particular working with registered providers and Parish Councils. Officers had also been working with the Community Development Agency and there had been a lot of good work in respect of bringing empty properties back into use.

Members were advised that the strategy aimed to meet the needs of a growing elderly population as well as meeting the needs of vulnerable people and encouraging stronger communities. Officers hoped to report back to Members at a later date with a draft housing strategy.

Councillor J Mayes sought and was given a detailed breakdown of the flexi care scheme in operation at Carlton Court. Councillor N Symonds commented on whether similar schemes could be opened up across East Herts.

The Housing Strategy and Development Manager stated that this would have revenue implications for Hertfordshire County Council. East Herts Council was working strategically with the County Council to ensure that any future flexi care schemes were financially viable and were delivered in the right geographic locations, as they were very popular and a good accommodation model for older residents.

In response to a query from Councillor M Wood in respect of returning empty homes to use each year, the Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support advised that additional resources had been added to the empty homes team and an Officer was improving the data set and tracking progress year on year.

Members received the report and requested that a further report be submitted in 2015.

RESOLVED – the (A) progress made in respect of the Housing Strategy Action Plan 2013 – 2016 be noted; and

(B) the Housing Strategy Action Plan be submitted to Community Scrutiny Committee in 2015.

250 WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15

The Chairman submitted a report setting out the future work programme for Community Scrutiny Committee for 2014/15. The Scrutiny Officer asked Members if they were willing to accept a new agenda item for the 10 March 2015 meeting of the Committee, in respect of the implementation of the Anti Social Behaviour (ASB), Crime and Policing Act. The report would provide an outline of the new powers and report on their use since 20 October 2014. It would also provide four months of data for Members to scrutinise. The Scrutiny Officer stated that this would meet the requirements detailed at paragraph 2.2 of the report now submitted.

Members were also asked whether there were any additional topics they wished to put forward for inclusion on any future agenda.

The Scrutiny Officer stated that an annual update report in respect of the Ageing Well Initiative would be submitted to the 22 September 2015 meeting of the Committee.

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

251 COMMUNITY SCRUTINY CORPORATE HEALTHCHECK THROUGH TO JULY 2014

The Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services submitted a report on the performance of key indicators relating to Community Scrutiny for the period May – July 2014.

Members were advised that, in respect of EHPI 3b – Usage: number of swims (16 – under 60 year olds), performance was ‘Red’ for Quarter 1 on the basis that the number of adult swims was below target. The Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services advised that this downturn was believed to be partly due to an upturn in gym membership whose swim sessions were not recorded separately.

Members were advised that gym members were able to have a swim without this being recorded. Everyone Active was seeking to stem the decline by adding additional early morning swims at Grange Paddocks and were also looking at other promotional activities.

The Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services advised that EHPI 11.1 and EHPI 11.2 had been introduced as requested. Members were advised that comparison data in respect of the rental income from traders and the number of producers at Hertford Farmers Market would, if possible, be presented at future meetings of Community Scrutiny Committee.

Members received the report.

RESOLVED – that performance figures for May to July 2014 as detailed in the report now submitted, be received.

The meeting closed at 7.55 pm

Chairman

Date