

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY 26 MAY 2015, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor P Phillips (Chairman).
Councillors M Allen, R Brunton, S Bull,
J Cartwright, M Casey, R Henson, M Pope,
M Stevenson and J Wyllie.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors A Alder, K Brush, L Haysey,
P Ruffles, K Warnell and G Williamson.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Ryan Brock	- NGDP Graduate Trainee
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
Peter Mannings	- Democratic Services Officer
Alasdair McWilliams	- Information and Digital Media Manager
Ceri Pettit	- Corporate Planning and Performance Manager
Neil Sloper	- Head of Information, Customer and Parking Services
Adele Taylor	- Director of Finance and Support Services
Ben Wood	- Head of Business Development

22 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

It was proposed by Councillor J Wyllie and seconded by Councillor S Bull that Councillor M Pope be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee for the 2015/16 civic year.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, Councillor M Pope was appointed Vice-Chairman of the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee for the 2015/16 civic year.

RESOLVED – that Councillor M Pope be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee for the 2015/16 civic year.

23 MINUTES – 17 MARCH 2015

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

24 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Members and Officers to the first meeting of the Committee in the 2015/16 civic year. He encouraged Members to ask questions of Officers regarding anything they were unsure about.

25 2015/16 WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman submitted a report setting out the Committee's future work programme for 2015/16. The Scrutiny Officer advised that the work programme was similar to the one that had been in place at the end of the 2014/15 civic year and the programme was subject to confirmation by the new Committee.

The Chairman commented on why the Customer Services Strategy project plan had been delayed by two months to

the July 2015 meeting of the Committee. The Head of Information, Customer and Parking Services advised that it was important for the new portfolio holder to be fully briefed on the new Strategy before bringing it before Members. He stated that the new Strategy would be more evidence based and would align more closely to the Council's considerable investment in business development.

The Chairman advised that the Committee could move items onto the work programme so that Members were setting the agenda for the scrutiny work of the Committee. He encouraged Members to come forward with ideas for topics and issues for scrutiny.

The Scrutiny Officer confirmed that the two items in red in the work programme would be brought forward to the July meeting instead of the August meeting. She reminded Members that the Director of Finance and Support Services would deliver induction training regarding the sources of Local Government Finance at 5.30 pm prior to the July meeting.

The Scrutiny Officer also reminded Members that scrutiny training was scheduled for 30 June 2015 once all of the Scrutiny Committees had met once. The Committee approved the 2015/16 work programme, as now detailed.

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

26 DATA PROTECTION – GOVERNANCE TRAINING

The Head of Information, Customer and Parking Services delivered a brief training presentation to introduce the issue of Data Protection Governance. He set out the role of scrutiny and provided a definition of Scrutiny and Governance. He then advised that Members would break out into 3 groups to discuss Governance, the Committee Member role and the Ward Member role with reference to the appropriate data protection issues that might be

encountered.

The Director of Finance and Support Services summarised the discussions in respect of data protection and governance. The Head of Information, Customer and Parking Services provided a summary of the discussions in respect of data protection and the Committee Member role. Finally, the Information and Digital Media Manager summarised the discussion had by Members relating to data protection and the role of the Ward Member.

Officers responded to a few brief questions that were asked by Members. The Committee received the presentation and the training.

RESOLVED – that the presentation and the training be received.

27 REVIEW OF COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS (3CS) 2014/15

The Head of Information, Customer and Parking Services submitted the annual report summarising the comments, compliments and complaints (3Cs) received by the Council between April 2014 and March 2015. The report highlighted the key issues, remedial action and learning arising from the 3Cs. The report also presented actions in respect of 3Cs for 2015/16.

Members were advised that the Council had received a very low level of formal complaints with 95 recorded in 2014/15. The Committee considered this figure in the context of the 250,000 telephone calls that Customer Services had received during this period.

The Head of Information, Customer and Parking Services advised that the number of Stage 2 complaints was also low and the Council's customers had a clear preference for raising complaints in writing with e-mail use continuing to increase as the main source of complaints. The Authority no longer provided printed complaint forms due

to a lack of demand although customers could print the form from the Council's website.

The Committee was advised that details of corrective and improvement action could be found in Essential Reference Paper 'C' of the report submitted. Members were further advised that 6 complaints had been raised with the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) regarding East Herts Council and of these, only one complaint had been investigated and the Council was found not to be at fault.

Councillor J Wyllie stressed that the Authority must cater for customers who had no access to a computer and e-mail. He referred to the stage 2 complaint regarding the false statement made by an East Herts Council Press Officer. He stressed that such statements should never be allowed to be issued. The Director of Finance and Support Services undertook to pick up this matter with Corporate Management Team (CMT). She also undertook to provide details of the process through which press releases are signed off by senior officers, in the Members Information Bulletin (MIB).

Councillor K Brush commented on how comments, compliments and complaints were captured via twitter and other forms of social media. The Head of Information Customer and Parking Services advised that if Communications became aware of a compliment, comment or complaint on social media all further interaction on that issue was switched to a more appropriate medium such as e-mail. The Committee received the report.

RESOLVED – that the report and actions in respect of 'Comments, Compliments and Complaints' be received.

28 PERFORMANCE INDICATOR OUTTURNS 2014/15

The Leader of the Council and the Director of Finance

and Support Services submitted a report that detailed the performance information based upon all the indicators that were monitored by the Authority. The purpose of the report was to inform Members of the performance outturns for 2014/15.

The Head of Business Development advised that the Authority utilised priorities, actions and performance indicators to measure progress and report to Scrutiny and make recommendations to the Executive.

The Corporate Planning and Performance Manager referred Members to paragraph 2.1 for the red, amber and green (RAG) status analysis in respect of the 63 East Herts Performance Indicators (EHPIs) for 2014/15. Page 41 of the report set out the reasons why a number of EHPIs were off target and more detailed feedback would be reported to Scrutiny via the regular health check reports.

Members were advised that there were 11 indicators for 2014/15 that did not currently have targets as they were either new or were trend only measures. The Committee was advised that performance for 13 indicators had improved. However, 13 indicators showed a decline in performance when compared to the previous year, although most of these were still performing in the green category.

The Corporate Planning and Performance Manager concluded that targets were generally being met. However, the direction of travel showed there were a number of indicators which had a long term declining trend which could put them at risk of being off target in the future. Members were referred to Essential Reference Papers 'C' and 'D' of the report submitted for data quality spot check information and benchmarking data.

In response to comments from Councillor J Wyllie regarding EHPI 64, the Director of Finance and Support Services referred to the potential positive impact on the

New Homes Bonus of returning vacant dwellings to occupation. She undertook to reissue an article on that topic that had been circulated via the MIB towards the end of 2014/15 civic year.

The Director undertook to make the Director of Neighbourhood Services and the Executive Member for Development Management and Council Support aware of the views of Corporate Business Scrutiny regarding the percentages of affordable housing currently being included in planning applications. The Director advised caution in that planning applications were determined by the Development Management Committee and it was not within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee to question those decisions.

Councillor M Pope expressed concerns regarding EHPI 181 and the outturn performance. The Director reminded Members that the 2014/15 target was 10 days and the outturn had been achieved based on the time taken to process housing benefit new claims and change events. Members were advised that this was calendar days so weekends and bank holidays reduced the time available for the Officer response.

The Director emphasised that there had been a significant increase in resources to cope with the significant increase in workload. The number of times Officers were being contacted per case was increasing as was the number of times each claimant was contacting Officers due to a change in their circumstances.

The Committee received the report.

RESOLVED – that the 2014/15 Performance Indicator Outturns report be received.

29 SERVICE PLAN MONITORING: OCTOBER 2014 – MARCH 2015

The Director of Finance and Support Services submitted

a report in respect of the Council's performance in 2014/15 against the actions and objectives set out at the start of the financial year. The report also monitored the status of all outstanding actions from 2013/14 and 2012/13.

Members were referred to paragraph 2.1 of the report for a detailed analysis of the 2014/15 service plans. The Committee was advised that paragraph 2.3 set out the key reasons why 11 service plan actions had revised completion dates. Paragraphs 2.5 to 2.7 set out a detailed analysis of the 2013/14 service plan actions and the 2012/13 service plan actions were covered by paragraph 2.8.

Members were advised that an overview of all Council achievements by Corporate Priority for 2014/15 was detailed in Essential Reference Paper 'B' and Essential Reference Paper 'C' detailed the 2012/13 and 2014/15 Service Plan actions that had been deleted or were either on target or where completion dates had been revised.

The Committee was reminded that the 4 year Corporate Strategic Plan and the Medium Term Financial Strategy would pull together the full annual position for 2014/15 when these reports were submitted to the meeting of the Committee on 14 July 2015.

Councillor S Bull commented on whether the '3G' all weather football pitches implemented in Hertford could also be considered for Bishop's Stortford and Buntingford as there was insufficient provision in both towns. The Director of Finance and Support Services advised that a new service plan target had been set to consider the East Herts leisure provision across the whole District. Members were advised that a review would be considered by Community Scrutiny Committee in due course.

Councillor Bull commented on whether the Authority should consider a policy of banning dogs from East Herts

recreation grounds due to the worsening problem of dog fouling. The Director and the Scrutiny Officer undertook to secure a written response from the Head of Environmental Services. Members were reminded that any policy change might have to be considered by Environment Scrutiny Committee in the light of provisions within the new Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act as well as developing case law.

The Committee received the report.

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

The meeting closed at 8.58 pm

Chairman
Date