

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON TUESDAY
28 JUNE 2016, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor P Moore (Chairman)
Councillors I Devonshire, J Goodeve,
H Drake, D Oldridge, M Pope, P Ruffles,
C Snowdon and N Symonds

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors A Alder, D Andrews,
E Buckmaster, G Cutting, M Freeman and
J Jones

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Democratic Services Officer
Cliff Cardoza	- Head of Environmental Services and Leisure
James Kidd	- Financial Management Graduate Trainee
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
Joseph Liggett	- Leisure Services Development Manager
Tracy Matthews	- Business Support Officer
Claire Pullen	- Engagement and Partnerships Officer (Grants)
Mekhola Ray	- Community Projects Team Manager

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Jan Stock - Active East Herts

117 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

It was proposed by Councillor M Pope and seconded by Councillor C Snowdon that Councillor I Devonshire be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Community Scrutiny Committee for the 2016/17 civic year.

After being put to the meeting, Councillor I Devonshire was appointed Vice-Chairman of the Community Scrutiny Committee for the 2016/17 civic year.

RESOLVED – that Councillor I Devonshire be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Community Scrutiny Committee for the 2016/17 civic year.

118 MINUTES – 15 MARCH 2016

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

119 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman, Councillor P Moore, welcomed all to the meeting. She hoped that working as a team, much could be achieved.

The Chairman welcomed Councillor A Alder to the meeting and stated that because of the synergy, both Community Scrutiny Committee and Health and Wellbeing Committee needed to work closely together.

The Chairman also welcomed Jan Stock, Chair of Active East Herts to the meeting. The Chairman stated that Ms Stock was also the General Manager of Wodson Park in Ware.

Finally, the Chairman stated that it was Cliff Cardoza's last meeting as Head of Environmental and Leisure Services. She thanked the Officer for his support, advice and professionalism to the Council and Members over the years.

120 DELIVERY PLAN FOR ACTIVE EAST HERTS

Ms Stock thanked Members for inviting her to the meeting. She gave Members a presentation outlining the background of Active East Herts (AEH) and what had been achieved since 2013 with the £5,000 a year from East Herts which had helped them attract £36,375 in direct grants from other sources. She explained that AEH was now strategically aligned with East Herts' priorities and that AEH was affiliated with 189 sports clubs, with access to volunteers, coaches and officials.

It was noted that AEH was delivering activities for the Sport England-funded Forever Active East Herts (FAEH) project. AEH was keen to utilise opportunities presented through their own strategy and draw on the available investment monies available nationally (£265m) for tackling inactivity and to support Sport England's new volunteer strategy (£30m).

Ms Stock explained that AEH was working in partnership with East Herts to deliver key projects integral to the Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy. She referred to the fact that walking and dancing were now categorised as activities within the Sport England Strategy which could now generate financial support. Ms Stock commented that Sport England was about robust measurement of outcomes and that they were keen to work with all partners to achieve measurable goals. She stated that plans were in place to align their Service Level Agreement and financial plan. Ms Stock outlined some of the successes supported by AEH and how these had been achieved.

Members sought and were provided with clarification on

issues such as partnership working with business and ongoing work via Street Games to reach young people to raise their ambitions. Concerns were expressed regarding Age Concern and people living in rural isolation.

Ms Stock noted that since Marianne McWhinnie had left the Council there had been a gap in terms of support to their work.

The Engagements and Partnerships Team Leader asked Members to consider AEH's Action Plan and the SLA, in the context of the District's demographics, to establish whether the approach outlined in the AEH delivery plan would engage with the inactive 50-75 target age group for Forever Active East Herts and to identify any gaps in the plan in the context of the Council's Sport England project and its alignment of the Council's corporate strategic plan.

The Engagements and Partnerships Team Leader explained what work was being done to ensure the elderly were engaged and to reach those living in rural areas (e.g. working with GPs and through the Village Hall Network).

The Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing thanked Ms Stock for her enthusiasm in promoting and raising awareness and the multiplier effect this had had, in terms of accessing other partnerships and groups.

Members received the report and applauded the recommendations now detailed for approval by the Executive.

RESOLVED – that (A) the report and presentation by Active East Herts (AEH) be applauded; and

(B) the Action Plan and the Service Level agreement as detailed in Essential Reference Papers 'C' and 'D' of the report submitted, be supported for approval by the Executive.

121 WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17

The Chairman submitted a report seeking agreement to the draft work programme for 2016/17 detailed within Essential Reference Paper 'B'. The Scrutiny Officer explained that there were gaps in the programme which needed to be filled and that the only requirement was that by the end of the civic year, Members were statutorily obliged to consider a Crime and Disorder report. She explained that a topic had yet to be identified but that a new Head of Service might have some thoughts on this.

Councillor P Ruffles suggested that a possible topic might be crimes against young people such as cyber-crime and other types of crimes affecting the young. This was supported and the topic added to the programme for further consideration.

Members received the report, as now amended.

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

122 LEISURE FACILITY STRATEGY

A report was submitted from the Leisure Facilities Task and Finish Group outlining the issues and options in respect of the management and sustainability of the three joint use leisure facilities and two wholly own sites operated by East Herts Council. The report also highlighted significant risks in terms of capital and revenue funding for the joint use sites.

Councillor D Oldridge asked Members to note that he had been a Member of the Task and Finish Group and felt that he should declare this. It was noted that this was not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest.

Councillor M Freeman, Chairman of the Task and Finish Group introduced the report and explained the group's

Terms of Reference.

The Leisure Services Development Manager provided a summary, the detail of which was set out in the report. The Officer referred to paragraph 2.19 regarding Ward Freman Pool and commented that -the school had e-mailed the Council to indicate that the School's Adjudicator had confirmed that the school pool had been built by Hertfordshire County Council for use by all local schools not just for the use of Freman College. The Schools Adjudicator had confirmed that it was a County Council asset which should not transfer to the ownership of the school.

The Leisure Services Development Manager explained the aims of the leisure strategy and provided a financial overview. He outlined the conclusions of the Task and Finish Group and summarised the advantages and disadvantages of each of the four options, with Option 4 being recommended as the optimum viable way forward and the one most likely to achieve the Council's outcomes and desired outcomes.

Councillor D Andrews, in querying various work streams as detailed in the report, referred to the absence of secure bicycle racks at Grange Paddocks, even though 40 new car spaces had been provided at the leisure centre. The Head of Environmental Services and Leisure explained that the Council was keen to provide more cycle hubs.

In response to an issue raised in the report, Councillor I Devonshire explained that there were ways of building on flood plains.

In acknowledging that this was a first step in the process in identifying a strategic framework for the future provision of leisure facilities and services, Members sought and were provided with clarification from the Leisure Services Development Manager on the options put forward and the proposed direction of travel, including costs associated

with running swimming pools, pool usage, levels of subsidy / concessions and how local pools contributed to fitness especially in relation to primary and secondary school children. In developing a strategy, it was suggested that a holistic approach be taken in terms of energy usage and how this could be reduced and whether Section 106 monies could be applied.

In response to a query regarding revenue costs should grant be reduced, the Leisure Services Development Manager explained how community trusts worked and cited Wodson Park in Ware as an excellent example.

The Chairman, on behalf of Members thanked all Officers who had been involved in the production of such a detailed and thoroughly researched report.

Members received the report and the recommendations as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that (A) the proposed direction of travel outlined in paragraphs 2.70 to 2.72 and the programme of work outlined in paragraphs 2.73 to 2.76 be endorsed;

(B) the Executive be advised that the proposed direction of travel outlined in paragraph 2.70 to 2.72 and the programme of work outlined in paragraphs 2.73 to 2.76 be approved;

(C) subject to (B) above, a progress report be submitted to Community Scrutiny Committee on 22 November 2016; and

(D) the work of the Task and Finish Group be extended to consider progress in developing the work streams over the next six months as outlined in paragraph 3.2 of the report submitted.

123 DISCRETIONARY COMMUNITY GRANTS REVIEW
PROGRAMME 2015/16

The Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing submitted a report updating Members on a review of grants allocated between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016. The report also sought the approval of the Executive to changes in the grants policy to support new corporate priorities as detailed in the Essential Reference Paper.

The Engagements and Partnerships Officer (Grants) provided a summary of the report as now submitted. She drew Members' attention to the fact that, as the changes to the policy were minor in nature, the Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing via his delegated powers could approve the revised grants policy as a non-key decision. Additionally, recommendation (B) needed to be amended to reflect the figures from "£500 to £1000". She also referred to funding priorities and said that one of the changes to the policy had been to add the priority of funding "projects that tackle inactivity and result in residents leading active and healthy lives."

The Chairman referred to correspondence she had received which stated that in relation to discretionary grants and the need to obtain endorsement from local Members, some applicants found Councillors hard to reach. She said it was best practice for Members to meet with applicants or at least have a telephone conversation before endorsing individual bids.

In response to a query from Councillor M Pope, assurances were provided that the Council was doing all it could to support the vulnerable and elderly, but that there was a role to be played by Councillors in terms of community involvement. The Engagements and Partnerships Team Leader noted that "pop up" themed grants, such as the recent Queen's 90th birthday, funded community events that brought people together and enhanced friendships/support networks.

Councillor P Ruffles referred to the policy that grants could not be provided to promote an individual faith, but that the Council would support a Church Hall application. Councillor Ruffles felt that this was discriminatory.

The Executive Member of Health and Wellbeing clarified that there was a difference between promoting a particular faith (which the Council would not support) and supporting wider community usage of the church hall and activities organised by a faith based group to benefit all the community. The Engagements and Partnerships Team Leader reiterated that this was Council policy. She went on to explain that she represented the Council on the county-wide Interfaith Forum and works alongside community faith groups to promote and build community cohesion.

Members asked that they be kept informed regarding which grants in their wards that they had endorsed had been successful. Councillor J Jones referred to the fact that Members used to have a personal “pot” which could be allocated at their discretion to support local voluntary groups. It was clarified that these funds had not been lost, but had been pooled and were now available through the central application process. The “mini-grant” and “pop up” grant schemes achieved the same outcome, with local Members promoting and endorsing applications from groups in their ward.

Councillors J Jones and C Snowdon referred to the complexity of the grant application process which hindered some applicants. Officers explained that minimum eligibility criteria required applications to have a bank account in their own name and be able to demonstrate good governance. Groups applying for larger grants needed to have a formal constitution.

The Engagements and Partnerships Team Leader referred to the consultation with village hall volunteers, where it was noted that, compared to other local authority

grant schemes, East Herts Council's was relatively straight forward. She added that Officers provided ongoing support and worked with applicants during the process, but that it was important the minimum criteria was met which was for their protection as well as ensuring proper use of Council funds. The Officer referred to the "mini grant" process which was designed to be simpler.

Councillor M Pope referred to the Community Health and Wellbeing Fund and asked for an update on why a substantial amount of money remained unspent. This was provided.

Members received the report and the recommendations as now amended.

RESOLVED – that the Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing, via the non-key decision process, be advised that the Committee supports (A) the changes to the Grants Policy as set out in Essential Reference Paper 'B' which supported new corporate priorities ; and

(B) the maximum amount for a Community Activities grant being immediately increased from £500 to £1000, as detailed in paragraph 2.19 of the report submitted.

The meeting closed at 9.25 pm

Chairman
Date